CORNUCOPIA

TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

ISSUE 34 VOLUME 6 2005

COSTUME DRAMA

GOLDEN AGE OF
THE OTTOMAN KAFTAN

ROUGH DIAMONDS

BLACK SEA
COUNTRY HOUSES

PRIVATE VIEWS

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OF THE LAST CALIPH

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Contents

Cover Story

Power Dressing: the dramatic imperial kaftans on show
at Washington's Sackler Gallery · 7

Cover photograph: detail of a 16th- or 17th-century Ottoman silk kaftan, from the Topkapı Palace,
exhibited at the Arthur M Sackler Gallery

Special Feature

LAND OF A THOUSAND MANSIONS
COUNTRY HOUSES OF THE BLACK SEA
A 40-page celebration of the architectural heritage of the Eastern Black Sea Mountains
Photographs by Ali Konyalı
Contributions by Mustafa Reşat Sümerkan and Michael Meeker · 40

Life and Times

And Where Shall We Begin?
An appreciation of Godfrey Goodwin by Maureen Freely · 22
The Man Who Made Albania: Ismail Kemal's roller-coaster career, by David Barchard · 35
Painting his Way into History:
The private world of the dashing last Caliph, by Philip Mansel · 78

Architecture

In the Wake of the Spirits: a beautiful small hotel
on the Bosphorus, by Patricia Daunt · 98

Books

Reviews by Tim Stanley, Ilber Ortaylı, Robert Ousterhout, David Barchard,
Berrin Torolsan and Andrew Finkel · 27

Food

Championed by the Cavalry:
Winning ways with okra, by Berrin Torolsan · 108
Off the Eaten Track by Charles Perry · 120

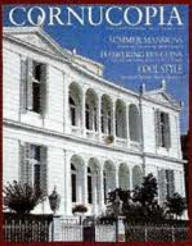
Regulars

CONNOISSEUR'S DIARY · 14
PRIVATE VIEW by Andrew Finkel · 18
VILLAGE VOICES by Azize Ethem · 117
RESTAURANTS by Andrew Finkel and Christopher Ryan · 124

CORNUCOPIA BACK ISSUES

For details of all back issues, including
collector's-item early issues, visit www.cornucopia.net

ISSUE 5



Palaces of Diplomacy
Where diplomats headed in the heat: Istanbul's summer embassies

ISSUE 18

CORNUCOPIA
THE OTTOMAN RIVIERA

Ottoman Riviera
Life on the Bosphorus in its Fifties heyday

ISSUE 19

CORNUCOPIA
FORGOTTEN RICHES

Çatalhüyük
The world's first city and its amazing wall paintings

ISSUE 20

CORNUCOPIA
THE LAKE THAT TIME FORGOT
ISSUE 20

Lake Köyceğiz
The lake, its people and its extraordinary basket houses

ISSUE 21

CORNUCOPIA

Damascus
Glowing palaces and cool courtyards of the old city

ISSUE 22

CORNUCOPIA

The Sultan's Chalet
A magnificent guesthouse built for the Kaiser

ISSUE 23

CORNUCOPIA
HAUTE OTTOMAN

Silks and Velvets
Glorious garments of the Ottoman court

ISSUE 24

CORNUCOPIA
THE WILD EAST

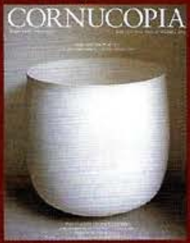
The Wild East
The fabled but forgotten frontier with Arabia

ISSUE 26

CORNUCOPIA
THE BIRTH OF ART?

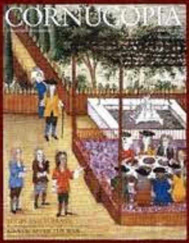
The Birth of Art?
Neolithic wonders of the eastern Taurus Mountains

ISSUE 27



Sublime Simplicity
Timeless classics: the perfect pots of a modern master

ISSUE 29



Ottoman gardens
How the Ottomans turned gardens into an art form

ISSUE 30

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EARLY JOURNEYS

Early Journeys
Beyond the Euphrates in the '50s: Cafer Türkmen and Josephine Powell

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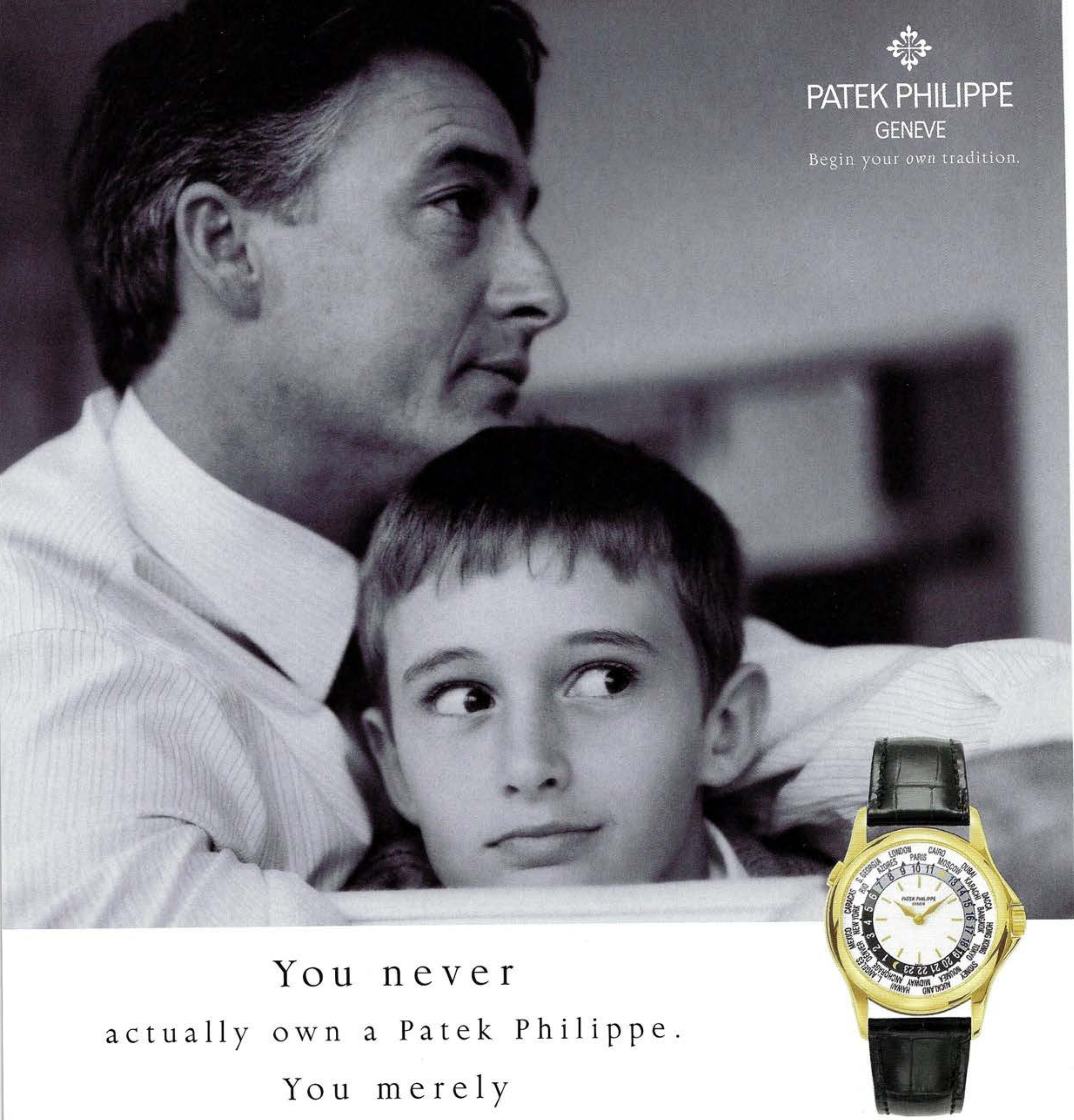
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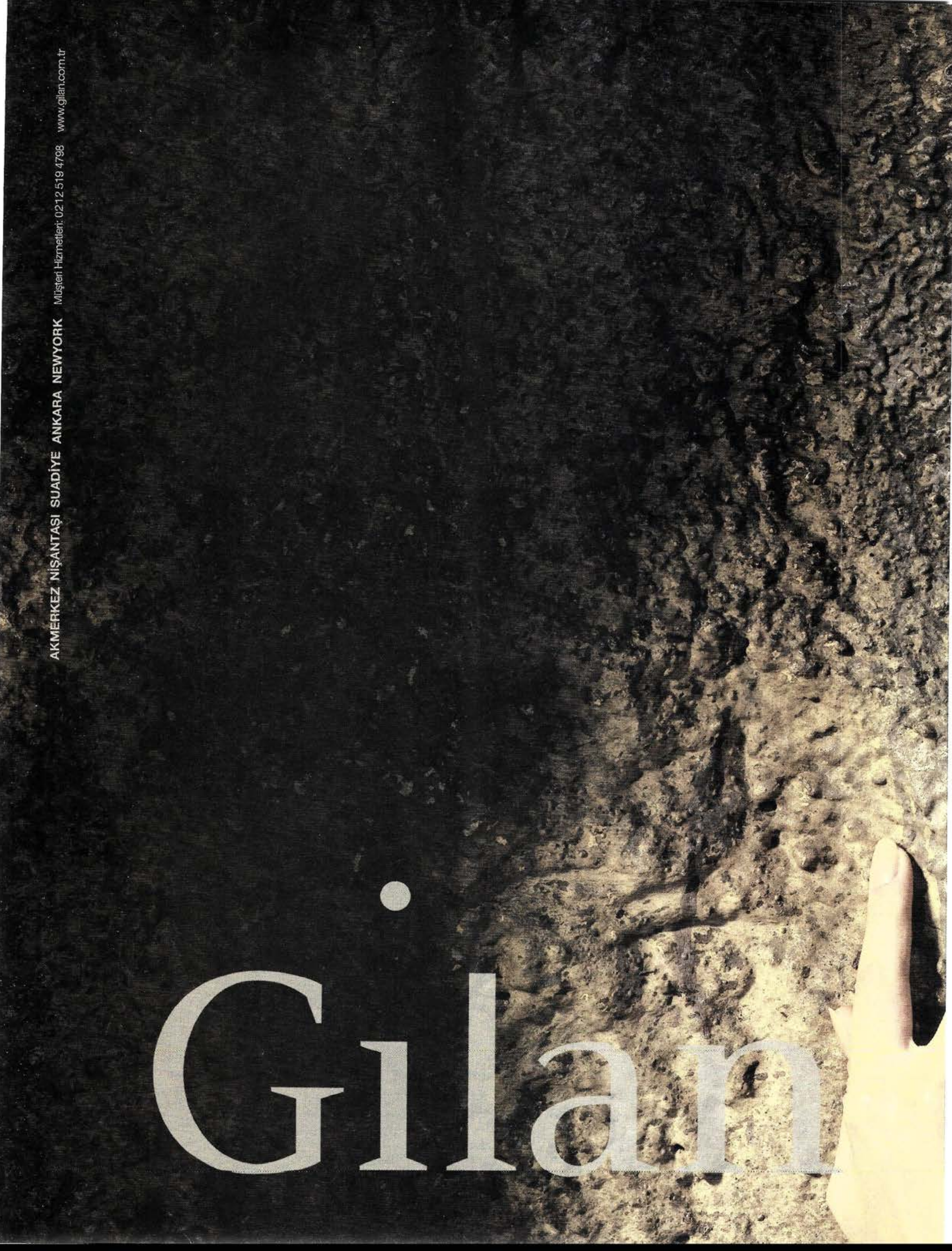

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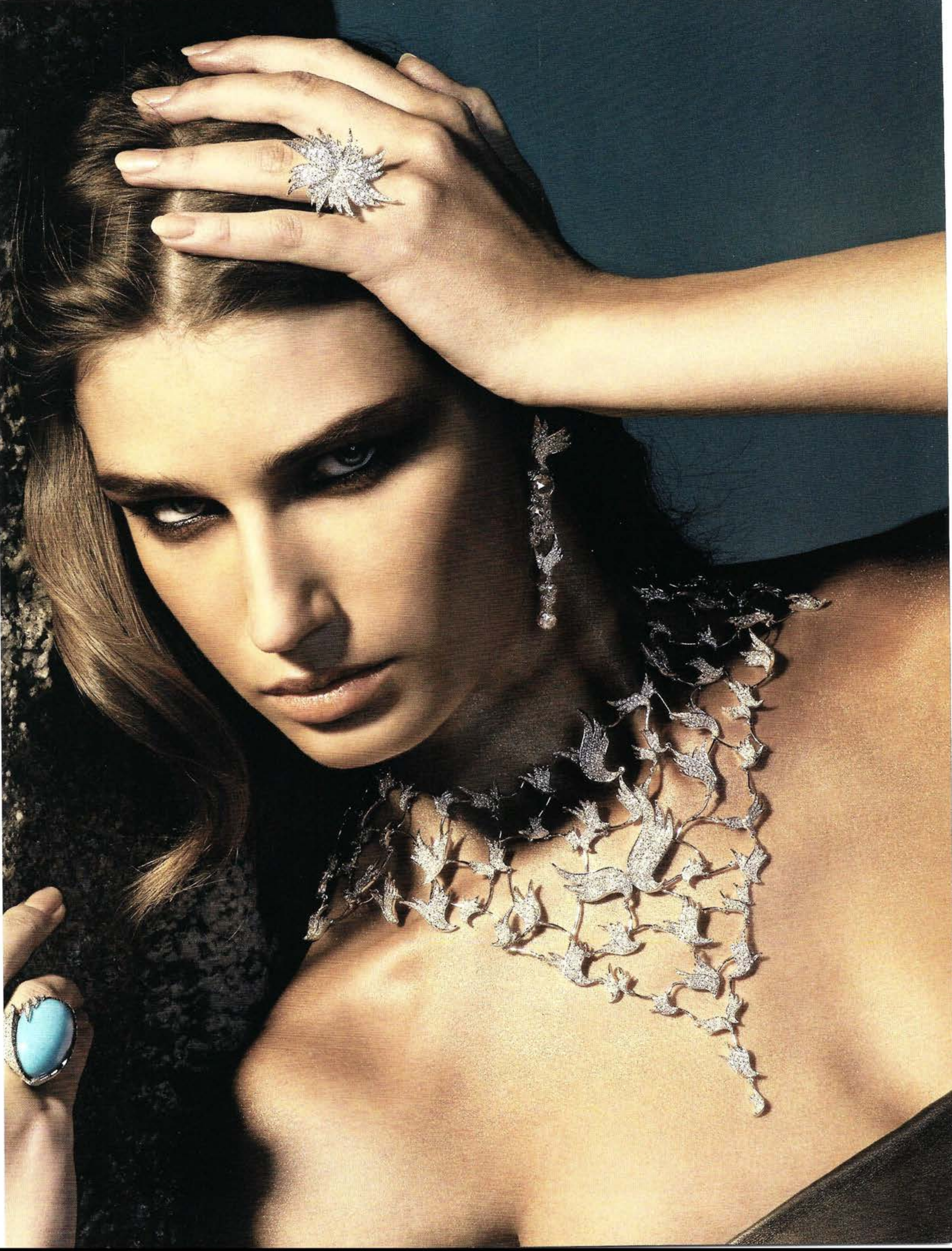

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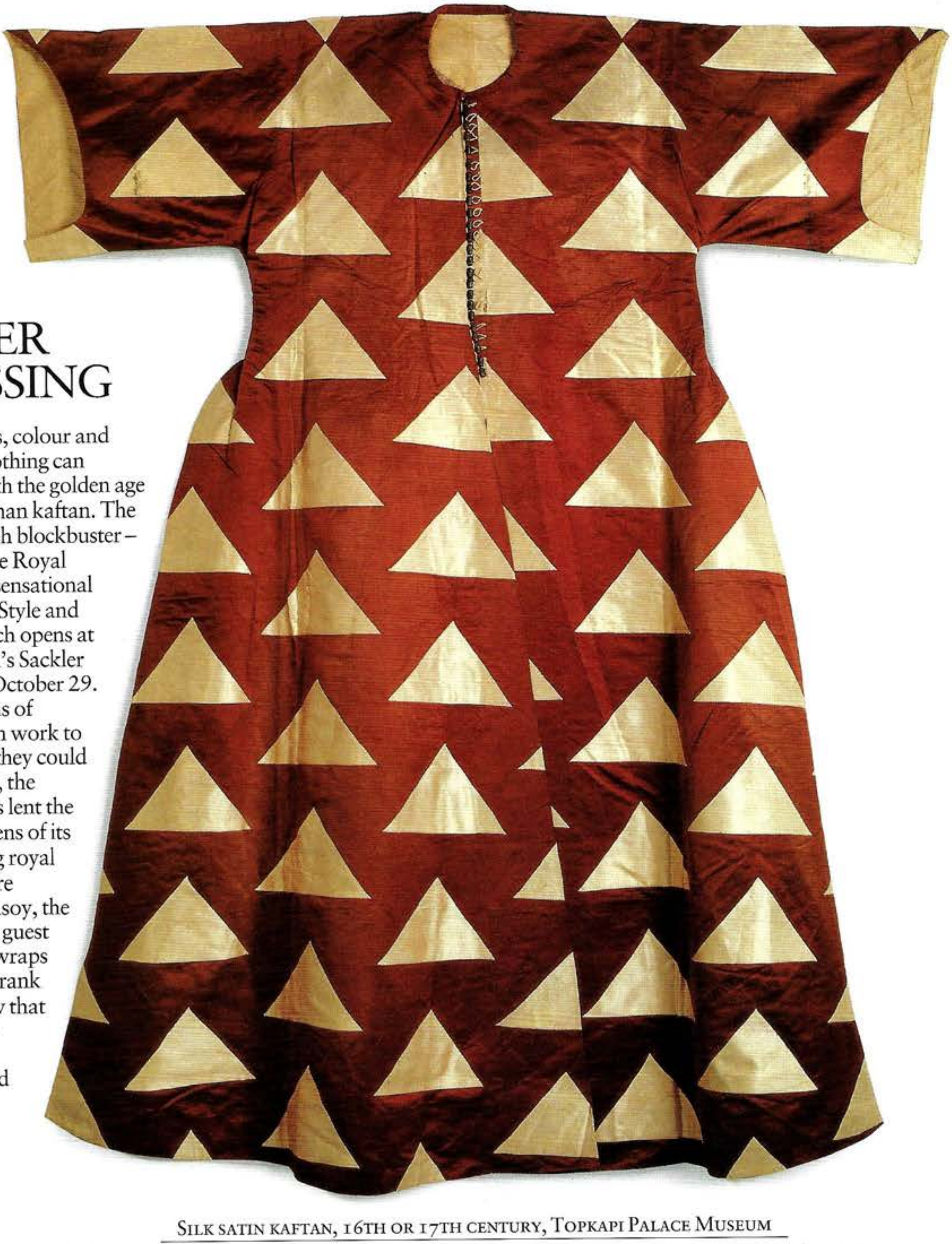
CONNOISSEUR

HIGH FASHION MEETS HIGH POLITICS IN WASHINGTON'S FABULOUS KAFTANS

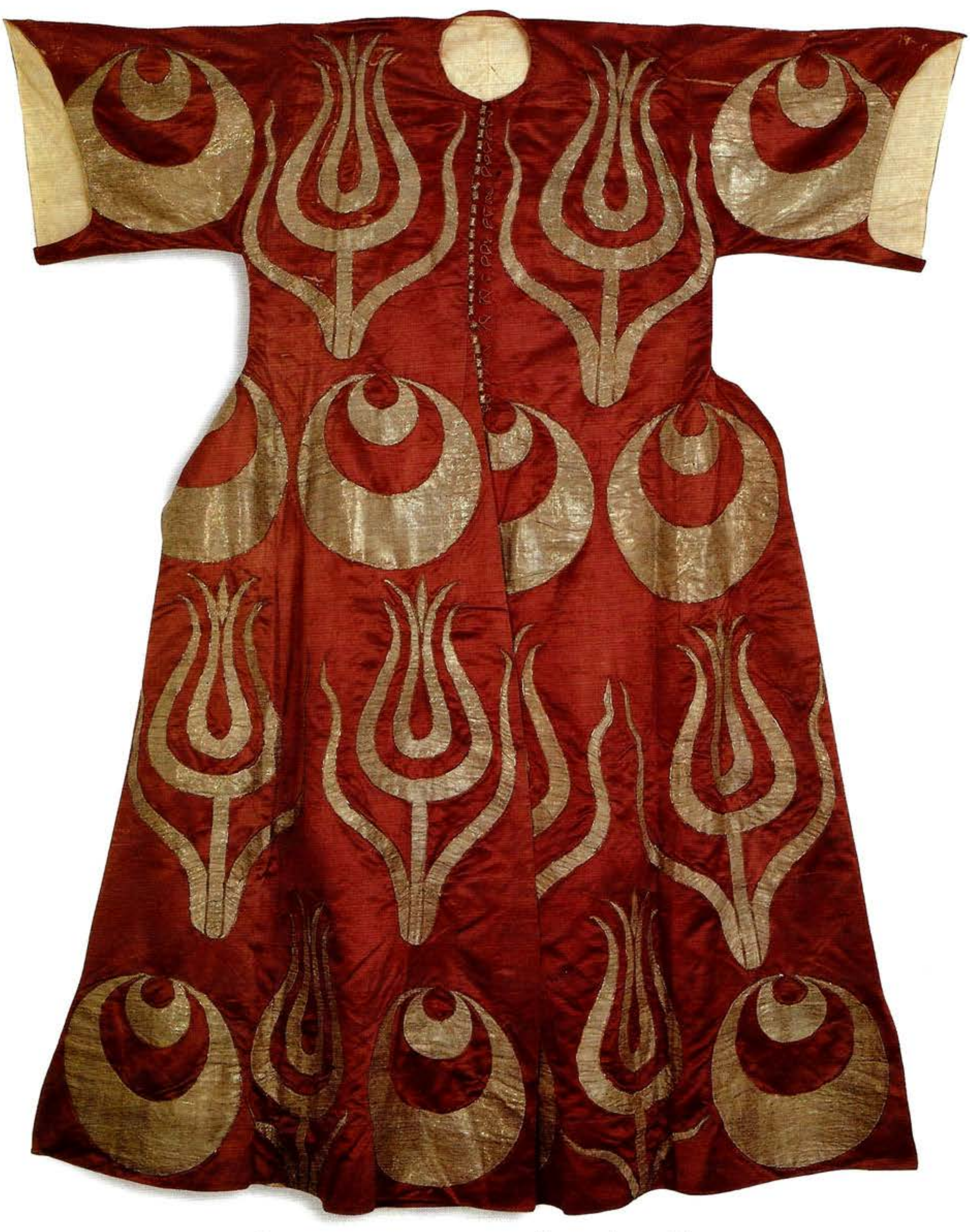
POWER DRESSING

For boldness, colour and virtuosity nothing can compare with the golden age of the Ottoman kaftan. The latest Turkish blockbuster – following the Royal Academy's sensational 'Turks' – is 'Style and Status', which opens at Washington's Sackler Gallery on October 29. After months of conservation work to ensure that they could travel safely, the Tokpapı has lent the Sackler dozens of its mesmerising royal kaftans. Here Nurhan Atasoy, the exhibition's guest curator, unwraps six robes of rank from a show that promises to sweep the design world off its feet.



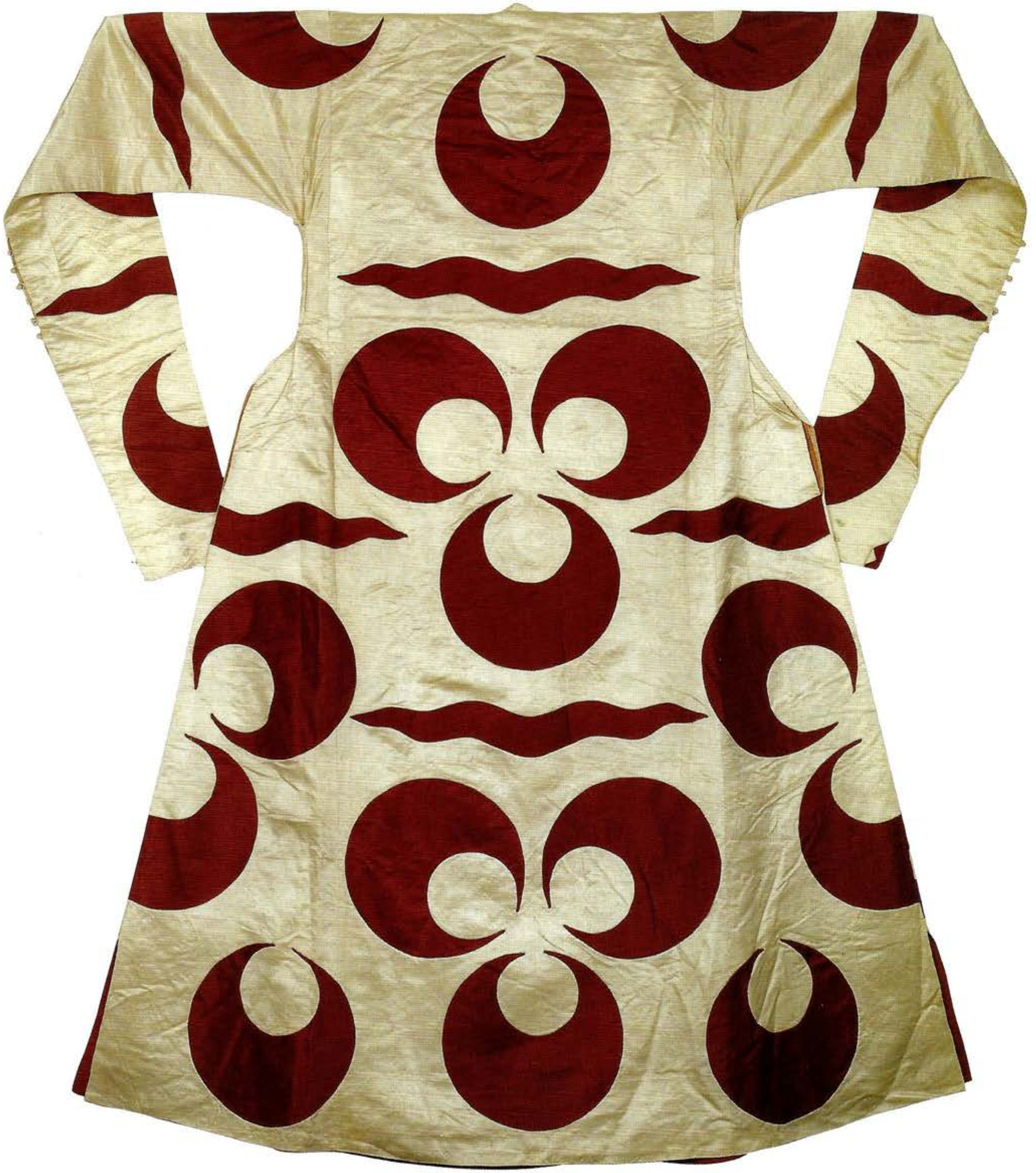
SILK SATIN KAFTAN, 16TH OR 17TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

The all-powerful design studio of the Ottoman palace developed a potent but mysterious language of symbols. Designs ranging from the luxuriantly floral to the starkly abstract were used across the visual arts in a concerted imperial branding exercise. Worn by sultans and bestowed as gifts to foreign notables, kaftans acted, in effect, as walking logos. Here a stepped design of appliquéd triangles graces a gorgeous red satin-weave silk with a delicate leaf pattern.



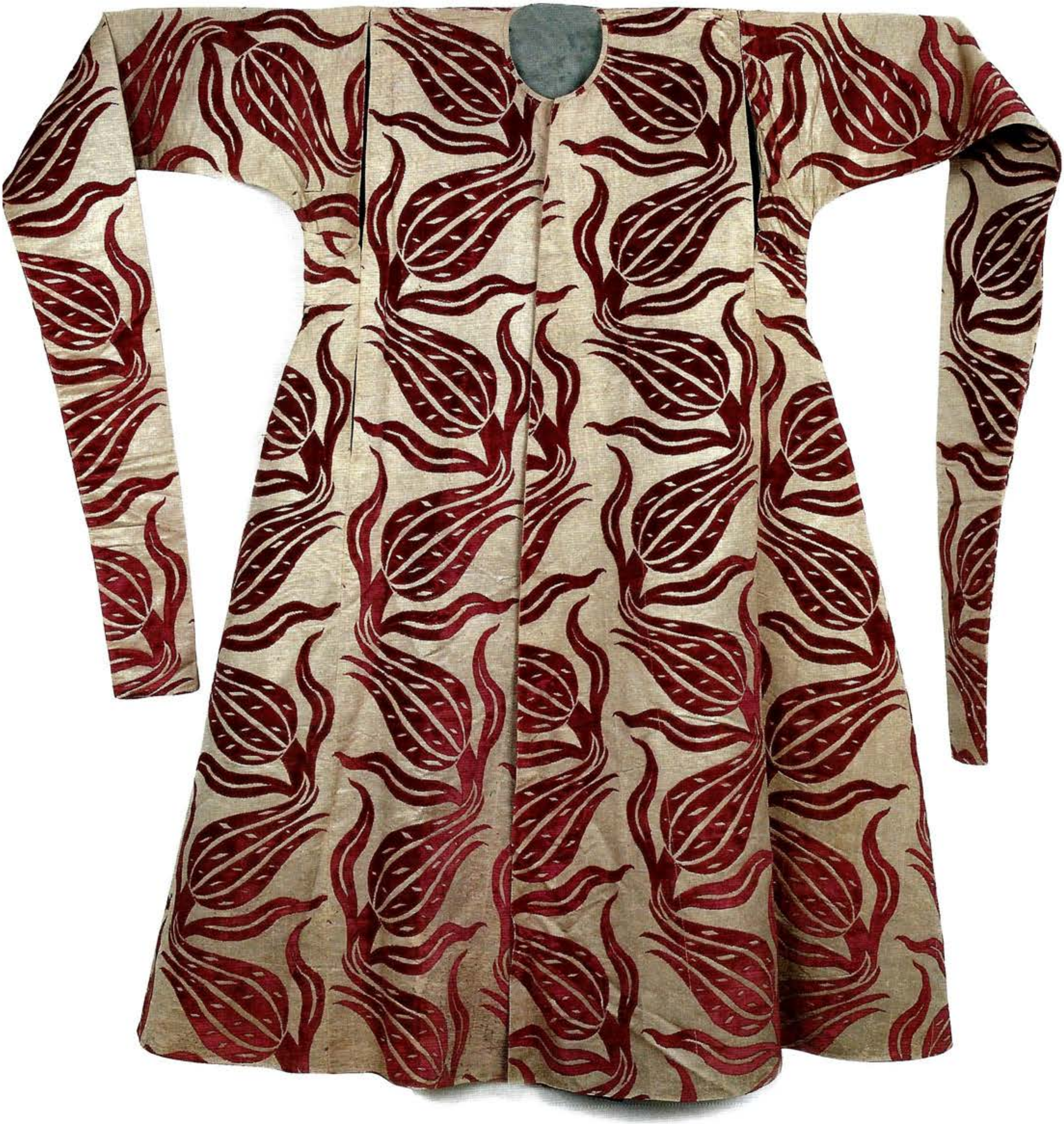
SILK KAFTAN, EARLY 17TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

There were doubts about the dating of this satin-weave kaftan, which was variously attributed to Murat III (1574–95) and Süleyman II (1687–91) until the recent discovery in the pockets of two coins dated 1603, the year of Ahmet I's accession. The huge crescents and tulips in silver thread are appliquéd with stitches concealed by infinitely fine silk ribbon. Crescents and tulips are both classic Ottoman symbols, but it is very rare to find them combined.



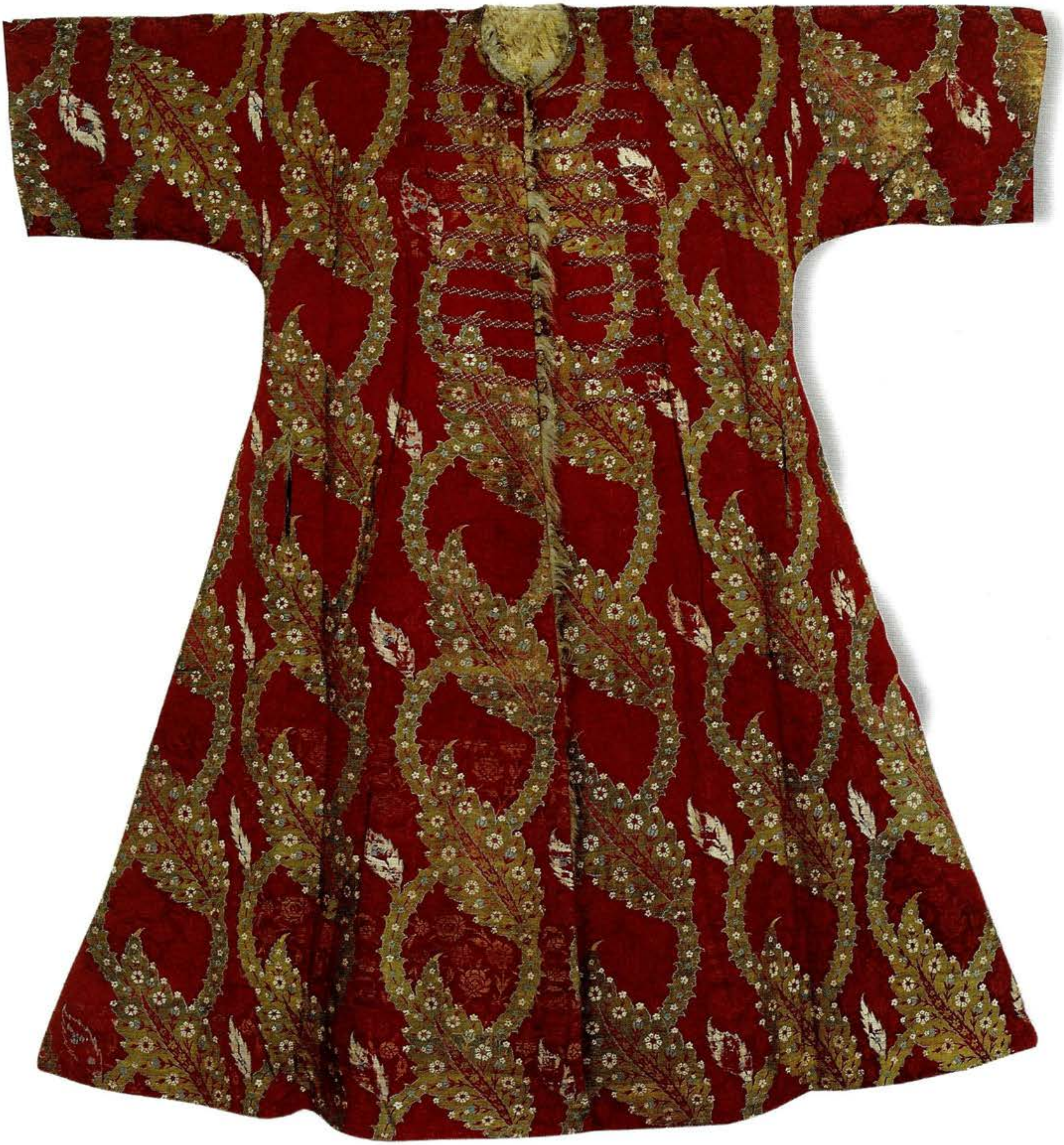
SILK KAFTAN, 17TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

The red *çintamani* motifs on this kaftan, which possibly belonged to Deli (Mad) Ibrahim II (1640–48), are so exquisitely applied that they give the illusion of being printed. The barely visible joins are made by cutting a hole in the ground fabric, laying the red silk behind and finely stitching the two together. Long sleeves were ceremonial, hanging down the wearer's back, in Central Asian custom.



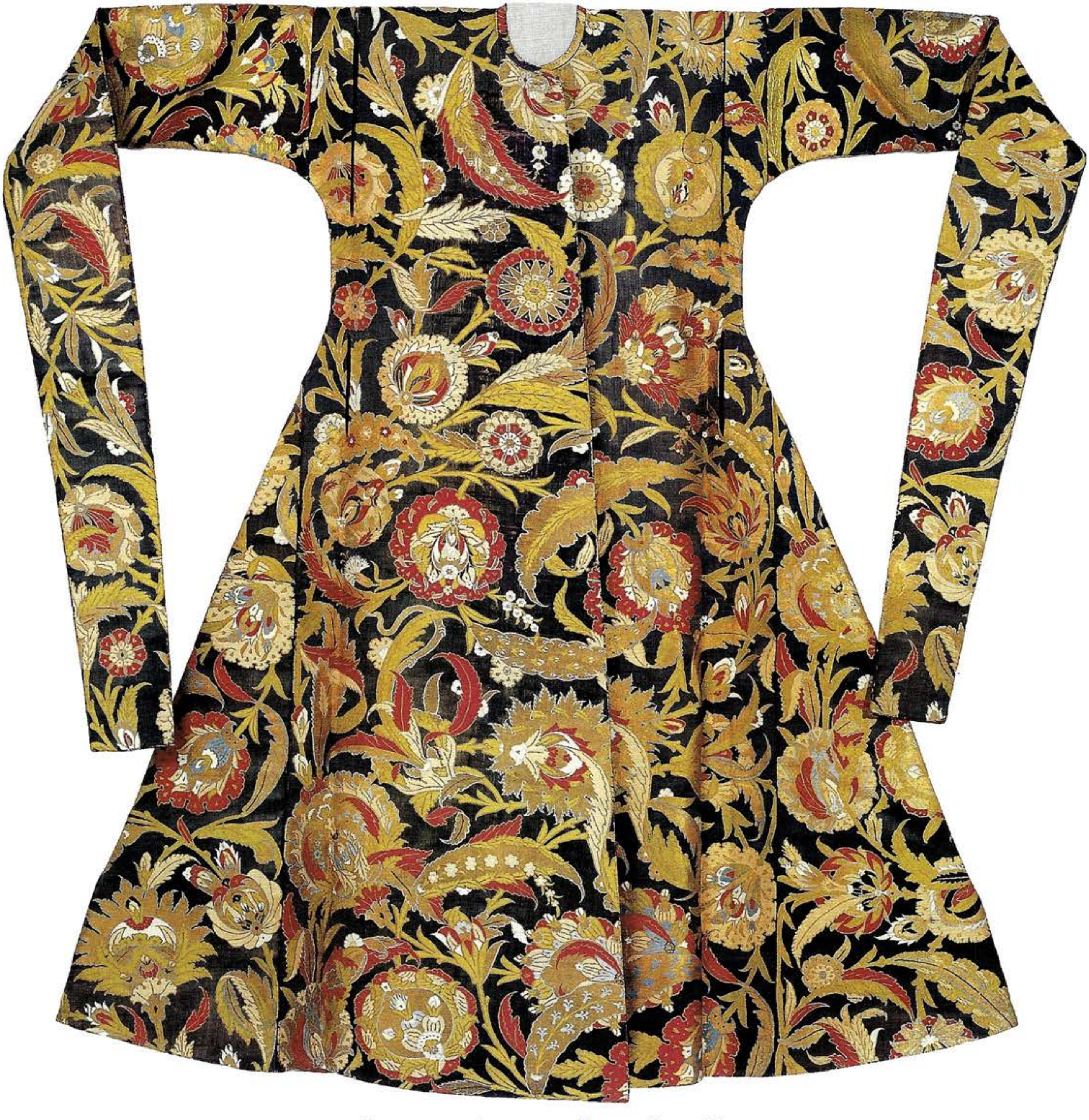
SILK KAFTAN, 16TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

These large tulips, with leaves that recall the wavy bands of *çintamani*, are distinctly Ottoman in design, but the velvet was woven in Italy in the second half of the 16th century. Sophisticated Italian velvets were particularly prized at the imperial court. The tulips are in relief velvet on a flat cream material woven in silver thread.



SILK KAFTAN, 16TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

Quilted and lined with fur, this short-sleeved brocaded winter kaftan was once thought to have been made for Beyazıt II (1481–1512). However, the bold pattern of undulating interlaced vines suggests a somewhat later date. The vines are of gilt-metal thread, and the crimson ground reveals a delicate pattern of curved leaves and lotus palmettes woven in imitation of damask.

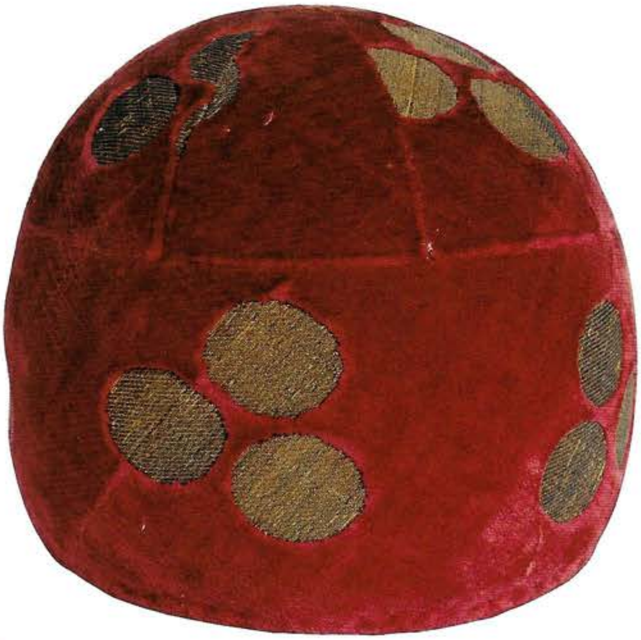


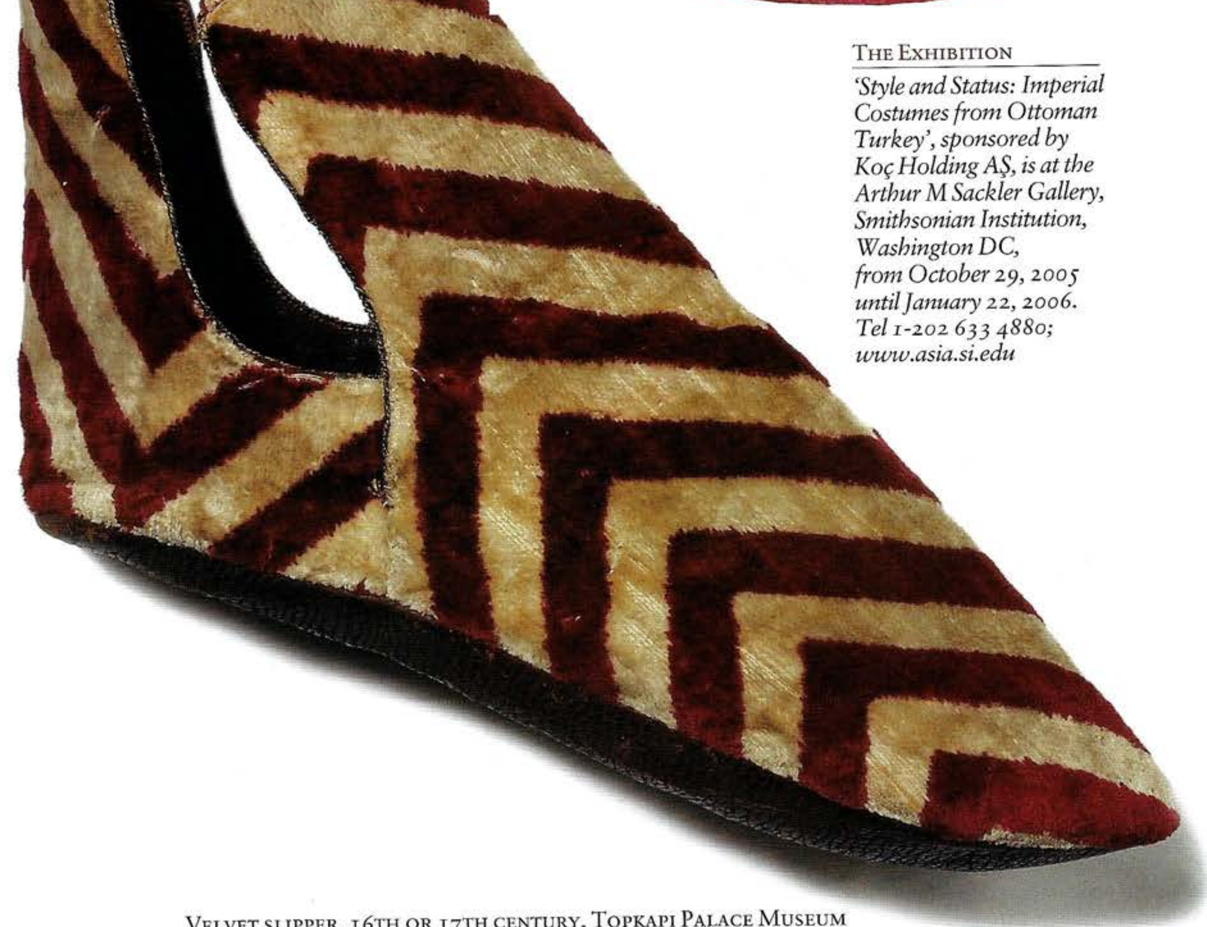
SILK KAFTAN, 16TH CENTURY, TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

Made from a single piece of *kemha* (brocaded silk) without repeats, this mid-16th-century kaftan, probably worn by a son of Süleyman the Magnificent, is unique in its rich palette and marks the peak of textile weaving. The black-green ground is filled with a riot of *saz* leaves, pomegranates, rosettes and peonies, recalling Iznik tiles in the Topkapı Palace's Circumcision Chamber, which dates from 1520, and manuscripts of the same era.

Velvet takke (cap), late 15th century
Topkapi Palace Museum

This deep-red cap of silk velvet decorated with a triple-spot *çintamani* motif in gilt thread was the base around which the wearer would wind a turban of the finest muslin.





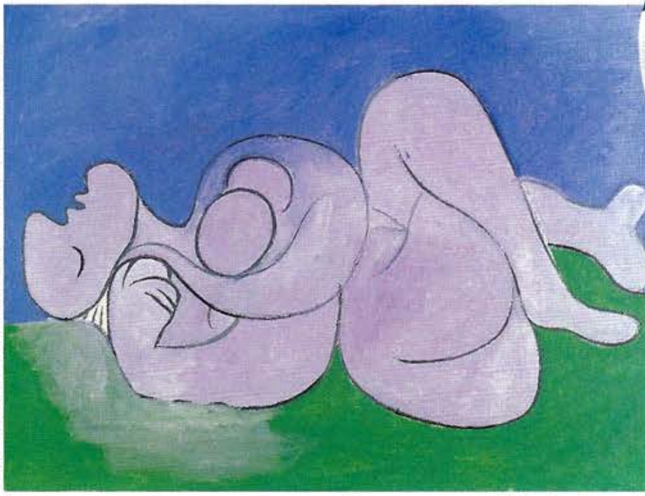
The Exhibition

'Style and Status: Imperial Costumes from Ottoman Turkey', sponsored by Koç Holding AŞ, is at the Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, from October 29, 2005 until January 22, 2006. Tel 1-202 633 4880; www.asia.si.edu

Velvet slipper, 16th or 17th century, Topkapi Palace Museum

This almost futuristically zigzag-patterned slipper, the only one of the pair to survive, is of Turkish silk velvet with a soft leather lining and sole. The same motif is often seen in material used for the Ottomans' beloved courtly tents. Among the most poignant items discovered in the costume cupboards of the Topkapı are the numerous lasts used by palace cobblers to make the sultans' shoes and boots.

CONNOISSEUR'S DIARY



IMAGES MODERNES, PHOTO: ERIC BAUDOUIN, SUCCESSION PICASSO 2005

PICASSO

SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM

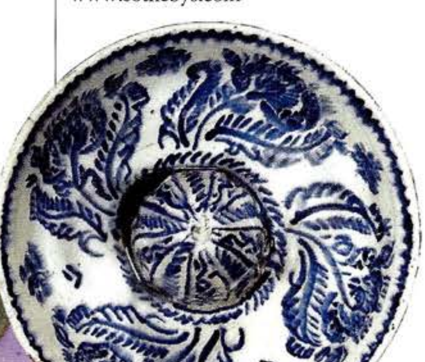
Istanbul's first important show of a major Western artist is a coup for the SSM. 'Picasso in Istanbul' covers every period of the artist's long, prolific life and includes 116 works owned by the family and never exhibited since Picasso's death. In *La Sieste* (1932), above, his voluptuous mistress Marie-Thérèse lies on a bed of vivid grass. The ceramic *Woman in a Blue Dress* (1947–8), right, was inspired by ancient Boeotian figures.
Nov 24 – March 26, 2006. +90 212 2772200; www.muze.sabanciuniv.edu

PICASSO AT THE SSM: 'LA SIESTE' (ABOVE), A PAINTING OF MARIE-THÉRÈSE WALTER FROM 1932, AND 'WOMAN IN A BLUE DRESS' (RIGHT). FAR RIGHT: SOTHEBY'S 18TH-CENTURY KÜTAHYA LEMON-SQUEEZER

ISLAMIC ART

LONDON SALES

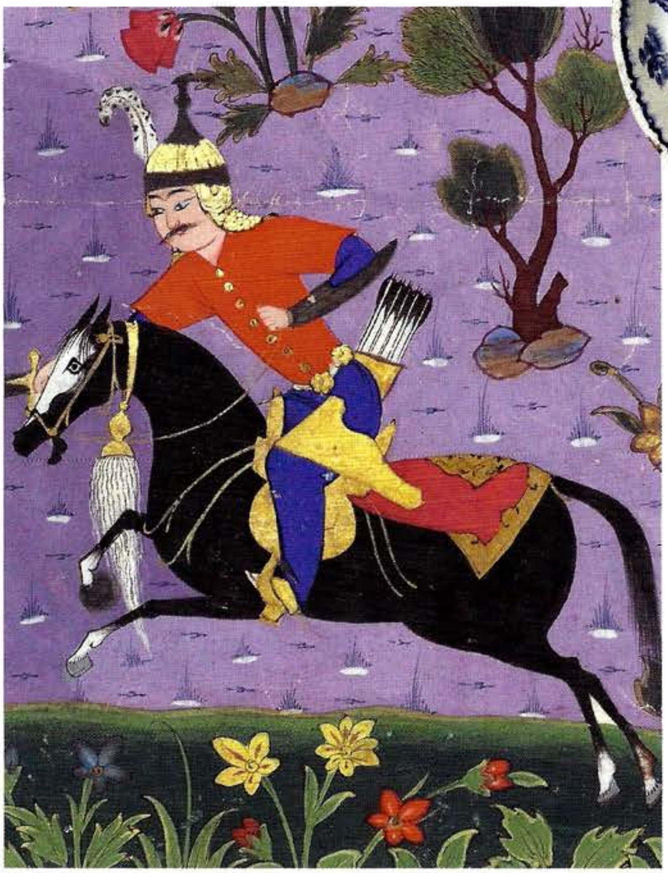
It is 16 years since the last lemon-squeezer appeared at a Sotheby's Islamic sale. Ingeniously designed to trap the pips, the rare 18th-century blue and white Kütahya example below was estimated to fetch £8000–10,000 in their autumn sale. Other covetable practical items included an exquisite 18th-century folding draper's measure inlaid with tortoiseshell, ivory and mother-of-pearl. A similarly decorated Koran stand and scribe's table were also in the sale.
www.sothebys.com



CENTRAL ASIAN COSTUME

TEXTILE MUSEUM, WASHINGTON

This Bukhara ikat – along with boots, belts and pigtail covers – is part of a small but fascinating show on the apparel worn by the nomads of the steppes. 'Silk and Leather: Splendid Attire of 19th-century Central Asia' neatly complements the grander 'Style and Status' at the city's Sackler Gallery.
Until Feb 26, 2006; +1-202 426 6841; www.textilemuseum.org



THE ECKSTEIN SHAHNAMA (ABOVE) AND (LEFT) A TEXTILE MUSEUM KAFTAN

OTTOMAN MINIATURES

SAM FOGG, LONDON

The charging horseman on the left is one of the 38 vividly painted miniatures in the Eckstein *Shahnama*, shown by the London dealer Sam Fogg in October. This magnificent manuscript is a sizable 460 mm tall and shows how in the Ottoman arts boldness was not confined to textiles. Firdausi's epic poem *Shahnama* – written to provide a dowry for his daughter around 1000 AD – inspired a whole tradition of illustrated manuscripts in Mughal and Ottoman courts. The text of this 16th-century Ottoman example is a shortened version ending with the death of Alexander (Iskender), a hero figure to the Ottomans for his feats of empire-building. A catalogue, by Will Kwiatkowski, is for sale at £15.
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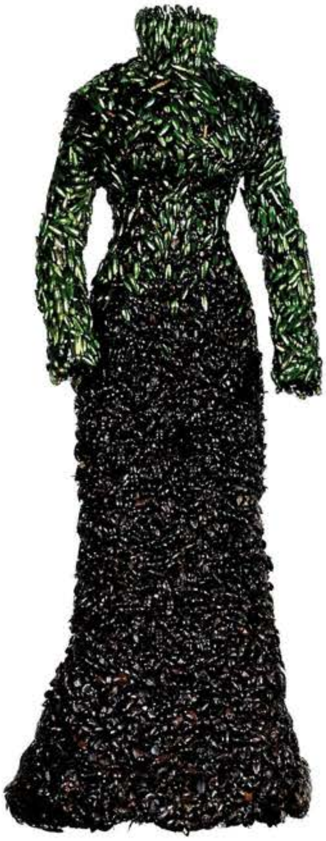
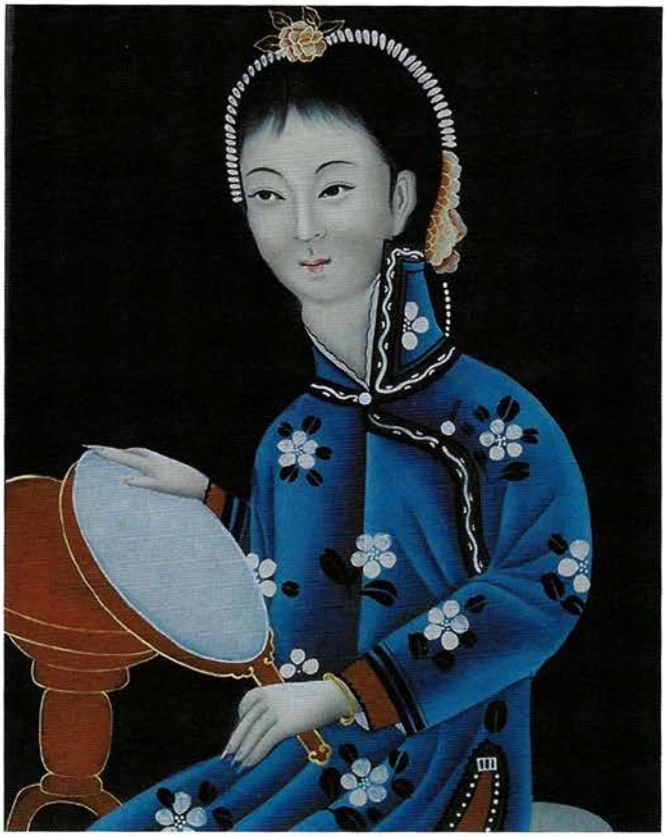
CONTEMPORARY ART
ELGIZ MUSEUM, ISTANBUL

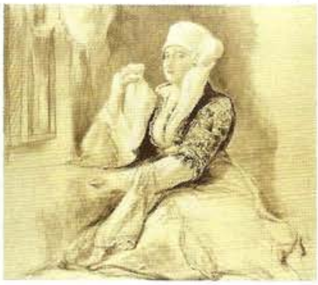
The arresting sculpture below by the Belgian artist Jan Fabre – a long dress made entirely of different types of beetle – is one of the pieces newly acquired by the Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art. Another is a work by Gilbert and George. The city's leading private modern art museum is located on the ground floor of a very unartsy office block. Levent; +90 212 281 5150; www.elgizmuseum.org





GLASS PAINTING
PERA MUSEUM, ISTANBUL

Paintings on glass are surprisingly widespread, no doubt because they are so obviously attractive. This Chinese example (left) is one of dozens being exhibited at the smart new Pera Museum in Beyoğlu. +90 212 334 9900; peramuzesi.org.tr

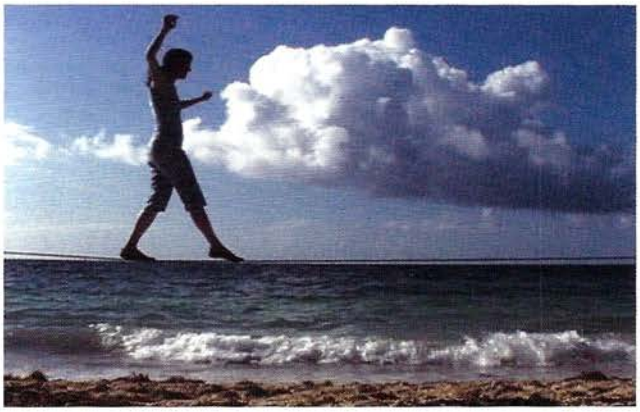


TRAVELLERS
VANCOUVER MUSEUM, CANADA

'No Place for a Lady' (until Sept 30, 2006), based on a book by Barbara Hodgson, explores the history of women's travel from the 18th century to the 1930s. Among the exhibits is Wilkie's *Mme Josephine* (above). She was a much-loved hotelier in Istanbul in the 1840s. www.vanmuseum.bc.ca

CONTEMPORARY ART
ISTANBUL MODERN

Anish Kapoor, Richard Wentworth and Janine Antoni and are among the 16 artists in 'Centre of Gravity', showing at the newly opened Istanbul Modern in Tophane (until Jan 8). In Antoni's DVD installation (right) a woman appears to walk on water. Arif Asçı's cinematic wide-angle photograph *Crowd* (below), which was in the museum's 'Cityrama' show in the summer, features in a lavish catalogue that opens in concertina-fashion. +90 212 334 7310; istanbulmodern.org



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JÜRGEN FRANK

Private view

AS TURKEY'S INVITATION TO JOIN THE EU CLUB ARRIVES AT LAST, ANDREW FINKEL PONDERS THE LURE OF THE DARK SIDE, WATCHES HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF AT ISTANBUL'S BIENAL, AGONISES OVER THE HORRORS OF ITS PLANNED NEW SKYLINE, AND PUZZLES OVER EUROPE'S VANISHING TURKS

Talks about talks

So the EU is not going to be an all-Christian club after all, although many thought that Turkey's progress to the will-they-won't-they-will-they-won't-they start of negotiations bore more than a passing genuflection to Mel Gibson's depiction of the pain of ascending Calvary. It was over forty years ago, in 1963, with the signing of the Ankara Treaty, that Brussels issued the diplomatic equivalent of a vague invitation to come round to the club for dinner. The intervening years have not been easy but finally the invitation came. Abdullah Gül, the Turkish foreign minister, had straightened his tie, bought the flowers and was just about to ring the front-door bell when Austria declared that it might be better if he ate in the kitchen. In the end Jack Straw, in the name of the British presidency, twisted arms, stopped the clock, and the Austrians relented. Sometime after midnight on October 3 everyone shook hands and negotiations to admit Turkey into full membership of the European Union were under way.

Unfortunately for Turkey, talks start at a time when Europe itself is weary of expansion. Although it was not a referendum specifically on Turkey, the French and Dutch electorate famously voted to reject a constitutional treaty. They had different reasons, one of which was that the electorate was suspicious of fundamentally diluting the cosy idea of Europe. The French speak disparagingly of an "Anglo-Saxon" model in which the union is less, not more, than the sum of its individual nations, and states themselves less interventionist in subsidising not strictly economic ways of life.

Not all in Europe are in agreement. Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats are all for pressing forward with painful reform. The paradox is that the Anglo-Saxon model is far more likely to be able to accommodate Turkish membership in an estimated ten years' time. But of course it is parties like the CDU that are most antipathetic to Turkey becoming a member of the club.

Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats' eagerness to promise Turkey *Gastarbeiter* status in Europe – that of a privileged partner who shouldn't feel entirely at home – did not, however, prove the vote-getter she might have hoped at the last election. The Austrian government, too, would like to win domestic applause for its strong stand against Turkey, but in the end, apart from some concessions over talks with Croatia, it had to back down.

It is up to Ankara to ensure that in the coming years being anti-Turkish will not curry favour with Europe's electorate. In a way Turkey has the advantage. It is a society that knows that it has to embrace change over the next decade. Yet even without Turkey, Europe, too, must transform itself – a lesson which many are finding hard to digest.

On the Dark Side

I was born too late to be gripped by the *Star Wars* saga. I felt no excitement as Luke Skywalker flew his jet to destroy that big piece of moulded plastic. In subsequent years the effects got better and the dialogue more leaden. What do millions see that I don't? For many, the twenty-eight-year-long space opera is simply what they grew up with. People have had to make the same sort of decisions about life and love as the characters in the film, the same journey of self-discovery. Others go further and suggest that lurking beneath the computer effects of the latest *Star Wars* is a parable for our times about the corrupting nature of power. "Most bad people think they're good people," said director George Lucas at the film's opening in Cannes. To bring about "peace and stability" the film's villains invent a bloody war. Anakin Skywalker says at the moment of his transformation from good into evil: "You are either with me – or you are my enemy," turning into not so much Darth as GW Vader.

Not only has my life not been anchored in the *Star Wars* saga, I have been a ship adrift. I have little contact with the world of my childhood, and have lived in Turkey far longer than I did in the nation whose passport I carry. So it was not a shock so much as a pleasure to have dinner with someone whom I had been at elementary school with, a woman who has led an interesting and fruitful career.

Of course we talked about what happened to all the other children we knew all those years ago. Unlike me, she has stayed in touch. It seems that my best friend when I was five is now a doctor, married to a model and living in Hawaii. The girl I was too shy to talk to has not one but two sets of twins. Another girl, whose sister used to go out with my second cousin, appeared on *Oprah* with her book on how to master the subtle art of bragging. Another boy, whom we all thought would come to a bad end, came to a bad end.

How did we all end up becoming the very different people we've become? "And of course you remember Dougy Feith," my friend asked. Immediately an image popped into my mind of a young boy with a smile from ear to ear, full of confidence and wearing if not actually a real bow-tie at least a metaphorical one. "He's Doug Feith," she explained.

In an instant I realised. Doug Feith was, of course, until recently the US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, an early neo-con. In 1989, when I arrived in Turkey as a journalist, he was already allied with Richard Perle in trying to build closer ties between the US and Turkey and to establish military links between Turkey and Israel. I was trying to find out what Turkey was all about; he was already lobbying on Turkey's behalf. And of

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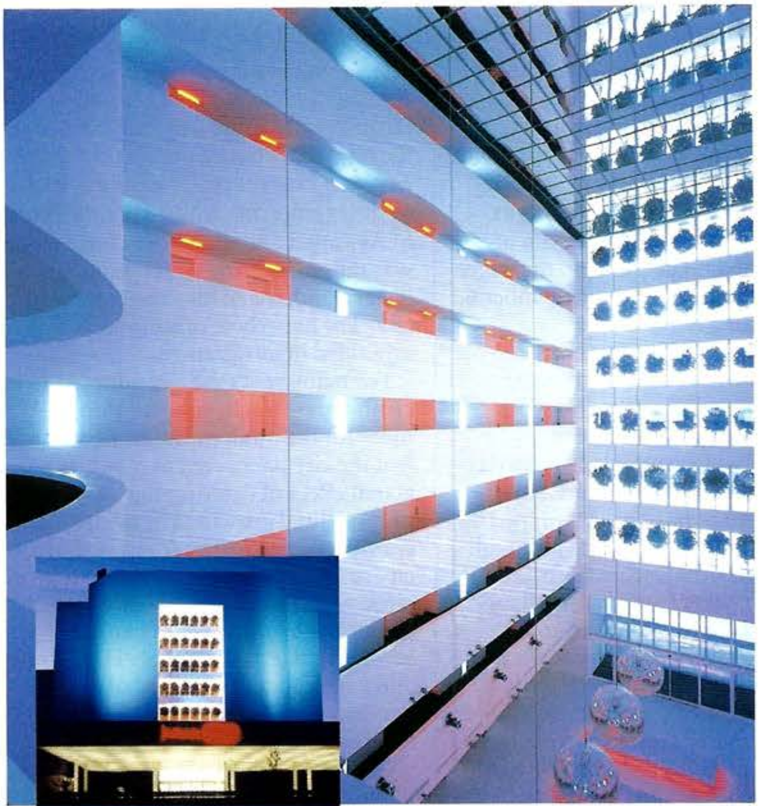

THE ETHEREAL LIGHTNESS OF BEING

course he was one of the chief architects of American policy in Iraq. His critics see him as being one of the ideologues who manipulated intelligence to make the case for invasion. Democratic senator Carl Levin, quoted in a recent issue of the *New Yorker* magazine, accused him of setting out deliberately to deceive Congress.

We sat together in class. How was it, I now spend my nights wondering, that he surrendered to the Dark Side?

Simple as black and white

Istanbul is the remarkably straightforward label given this year to the city's Bienal art exhibition and a contrast to the high-concept titles and cryptic puns of former years. After an afternoon spent wandering the back streets in a treasure hunt for any number of unusual buildings converted into venues, it became clear that it was not just the artists who were being asked to grapple with this theme. Wandering through a converted customs shed at an "exhibition within an exhibition" of Turkish artists, I became aware that there are layers of the vitality of this city that I will probably never see. I was left with that same slightly bewildered feeling you sometimes get in a bookstore when, next to the books you want to buy, are all the books you will never get to read.

Many of the works had a political punch: there were visual puns and caricatures (a woman religiously veiled in an EU flag); an enormous panoramic photograph (by Manuel Çıtak) of a swarm of all-male bathers in the shallows of an Istanbul beach had both humour and depth. Other works seemed a release of anger suppressed in the aftermath of Turkey's 1980 coup. I felt slightly guilty, therefore, at being mesmerised by a video work that seemed to be guided by a more conventional aesthetic concern. The piece, by Veysel Gençten, consists of fast-motion views of the city in different seasons and at different times. To watch, for example, the gathering mist speed up the Bosphorus seemed like a Victorian spirit photograph which had managed to capture some illusory ancient ghost.

It was a sensation I had again the same evening, when I chanced upon one of those old Beyoğlu shopping arcades where upstairs the Karşı Gallery was staging a photographic exhibition of events that had taken place on the street outside fifty years ago. On September 6, 1955, news of a bomb attack on Atatürk's home in Thessalonica prompted riots in Istanbul, directed initially against the homes and workplaces of the city's non-Muslim community, which turned into two days of wild looting. Those riots are now acknowledged to have been whipped up by government provocateurs, although at the time the events were blamed on the usual left-wing suspects. A military prosecutor, Fahri Çoker, was under orders not to try the real offenders, but kept at home detailed photographic evidence of the rioting, which he bequeathed to the Turkish Historical Foundation after his death in 2001.

Today the black-and-white photos are less a document of individual guilt than a bleak look into the human heart. Women armed with flags and axe handles smile like Doris Day. Men with James Dean haircuts and blood in their eyes rampage down the street. The most disturbing shots are of the morning after and of an empty Beyoğlu, ankle-deep in the litter of looted shops.

In a re-enactment of history as painful farce, a small group of right-wing protestors this September tried to disrupt the exhibition opening by tearing down the photos. The organisers of the biennial must have shaken their heads in disbelief at this bit of unselfconscious performance art.

Whose vision is it anyway?

The Byzantines and the Ottomans, if I have understood correctly, were good pre-post-modernists. They did the "vision thing" and let the consequences look after themselves. When Emperor Stan or Sultan Harry wanted a new palace or another mosque, they didn't fill out planning applications or go out to tender or convene international juries. On the other hand, it is true that the edifices which shaped the skyline of the imperial capital were not necessarily the ones that shaped the destiny of the city. Just as great (and just as expensive) as the engineering which kept the domes of Ayasofya and the Süleymaniye aloft was the engineering which brought water hundreds of kilometres into the city. The hyperbole of Istanbul is grounded in infrastructure.

For many years the city adopted as its symbol the First Bosphorus Bridge – more for the modern engineered lines it lent the city panorama than for its actual effect of determining the pattern of residential growth. The bridge, of course, opened up the Asian side of the city to commuting and defined an inner circle – inside the E5 motorway – of prime neighbourhoods. Then came a second bridge and a peripheral highway and a new concentric band of development. This was in a historical line that extended back to the 1950s, when Prime Minister Adnan Menderes left his imprint on Istanbul with the great boulevards that opened the city to the motorcar. Now there is renewed talk of a third bridge. In the post-war era the city has doubled in population virtually every ten years to over ten million in the 2000 census. Istanbul is a balloon into which you blow and blow and hope that it will never pop.

The rate of population growth in Turkey in general has begun to decline, although Istanbul still grows because of the disproportionate number of young people who "bring their fertility with them", according to Murat Güvenç, a city planner in the architecture workshop at Istanbul's Bilgi University. He says it is not a new bridge that will determine the next stage of Istanbul's development but an ambitious public-transport system, due for completion over the next ten years. When the metro link beneath the Bosphorus is completed it will be possible to get on a train in Maslak in Europe and end up in Kadiköy in Asia in less than twenty minutes. Yenikapı will be a major transport hub of the city, putting pressure on the historical peninsula at whose base it sits.

Imagine the Mercedes-Benz logo. The city which had been drifting north up the Bosphorus, the parallel vertical lines of the logo, will thus be drawn back down south towards the Sea of Marmara. The really shocking thing about this development is that it has given licence to the city government to indulge itself in untempered fantasy. "Outrage!" is how a recent issue of *The Architectural Review* described plans for a waterfront development scheme that might have embarrassed Emperor Bokassa. The plan is to remove the port facilities around Hydarpaşa train station, a two-kilometre stretch of coast between Harem and Kadiköy – below the Selimiye Crimean War Barracks and the high school designed by Raimondo D'Aronco. The scheme was put out to international competition in 2000 and sixty firms competed. The winning design was jettisoned in circumstances "shrouded in secrecy", *AR* reports, for one by Şefik Birkiye of the Atelier d'Art Urbain in Brussels. It consists of seven monster towers that create a rival skyline to the historical one across the water. The plans are not public, nor has there been any public consultation. Indeed the project has been taken out of the hands of the municipality of Kadıköy borough government and handed over to the ministry of public works. The buildings are meant to represent tulips. I suppose it could have been worse. They could have been giant wheels of döner kebab, to be served beside London's Norman Foster gherkin.

Kebabed

According to the ethnic-food specialists Peter and Colleen Grove, there are just under 10,000 Chinese food outlets in Britain, turning over some £2 billion. However, the country's kebab industry could well be twice that size, according to Istanbul-born Taflan Dikeç, head of the United Kingdom's National Association of Kebab Shops. Mr Dikeç's association, which also publishes the trade magazine *Kebab and Fried Chicken*, is determined to improve the image of what he describes as a niche market. That market happens to be at the bottom of the (fast) food chain.

This may come as a surprise to readers in Istanbul who in recent years have seen the humble kebab removed from grim basements inhabited by solitary uncommunicative males into up-market establishments with tablecloths catering to bankers and stockbrokers on their night out.

Of course there are expensive Turkish restaurants in England, but these have little to do with kebab shops. The kebab has become a non-proprietorial franchise. It is to McDonald's what Linux is to Microsoft – something which is controlled by the individual participants rather than a large corporation. They also rely on a very distinctive clientele: the late-night drinker. It seems it is hard to consume pint after pint of beer after a five-course meal, so most serious drinkers begin the evening razzle on an empty stomach. By pub closing time they are not just drunk but hungry, according to Mr Dikeç. First they go for a kebab, then they get into an argument, and occasionally they beat each other senseless.

Recently the British government has decided to try to stop what minister Hazel Blears described as the "kebab and fight culture" plaguing British towns. The solution was to attempt to stagger the times pubs shut, so that not everyone showed up demanding their kebab at the same time. "It would be easier for our members," Mr Dikeç confirmed.

Invisible Turks

One of the arguments used against Turkish EU membership is the fear of a horde of migrants. Strange, then, that large numbers of Turks living in Europe seem to have vanished into thin air. That is the conclusion of a report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation called *Young Turks and Kurds: A set of "invisible" disadvantaged groups*. The study, based on a survey of young people combined with thirty in-depth interviews, suggests that they were worse off than other ethnic groups in London.

The authorities just don't see the problem. While teachers, careers officers and local government understand the special needs of black and ethnic minorities, they are simply unaware that the others faced the same sort of difficulties. "I call it the iceberg community," said Mehmet Ali Dikerdem of Middlesex University, an adviser to the project. "People will take notice only if there's a collision."

One curiously positive thing is that the young people do not see religion at the root of their exclusion. They see less a clash of civilisations than one of ethnic gangs. "I suffered more after the killings [of the two Leeds football supporters in Istanbul] than after September 11. I was uneasy on the streets for a couple of months," said Murat, one of those interviewed.

Others see school not as an engine of social mobility but as a place to learn the lesson that they are inferior. Another child is quoted as saying: "I heard one teacher talk to another about me. She said: 'This Turkish girl Ebru is surprisingly intelligent, isn't she?' Obviously she doesn't expect me to be intelligent." The report concludes: "Many of the young Turkish speakers thus end their schooling demotivated, uninterested and without qualifications."

The Rowntree report's obvious message is that the English authorities have to wake up to the problem. On the other hand, this is not something which Turkey, as it negotiates its way into the European Union, can ignore. It may be too much to expect Turkey itself to take a more active interest in communities abroad when there is so much work to do at home. Yet they must address Europe's fears that Turkey will use its membership of the EU to export social problems and religious and ethnic tensions. At the moment they send a couple of imams. There are hopeful signs that those in the Turkish community in the UK who have succeeded take seriously their obligation to encourage the rest.

For all its gloom, the report says that young people remain optimistic about their futures, albeit because they rely on the informal networks of their own community. The authors warn that this dependence can trap them into not taking a fuller part in their host nation. Dr Dikerdem cites a notice in a north London newspaper announcing a new restaurant which is *"yerli ve yabancılara açık"* ("open to both locals and foreigners"). There is no sense of irony over which is which. ◆

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GODFREY GOODWIN (1921–2005): AN APPRECIATION BY MAUREEN FREELY

'WHERE SHALL WE BEGIN?'

... he would ask, when he'd tired of the adults and defected to the children's table. Then for the next few hours we'd watch him drawing hobgoblins in vast tableaux of tilting buildings, crashing planes, wobbling space-ships and ocean liners battling the waves.

Godfrey Goodwin, who died in August at the age of 84, will be best remembered for *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, the classic 1971 study that persuaded the British art-history establishment to cast away its tired prejudices and give this great architecture the credit it was due.

He will be remembered, too, for his fine works on Sinan, the Janissaries, Ottoman women, and life behind the scenes at Topkapı Palace, for his years of service at the Royal Asiatic Society, and for the inspired lectures that imbued three generations of students with his passion for Turkish art and culture.

But I shall always remember him as I first saw him, on the campus of Robert College, Istanbul, on a Sunday morning in the spring of 1961. I was eight years old, and standing in the atrium of Hamlin Hall, the student dormitory where he was the housemaster, and where my friends and I had been rollerskating for several hours. This was long before they invented skates that made no noise. It was, I think, the screeching and scraping of our metal rollers on the marble floor that had attracted our large audience.

The students watching us from the interior balconies were applauding us for an unusually graceful figure eight when suddenly there was silence. We looked up and there, on the top balcony, was an ominous figure in a striped satin robe. He glared down at us. "Ah," he said. His voice was rich, resonant and full of woe. It was clear from his watery eyes that he had been hoping to sleep in. We prepared ourselves for the dressing down we deserved. But when he spoke, it was to make a suggestion.

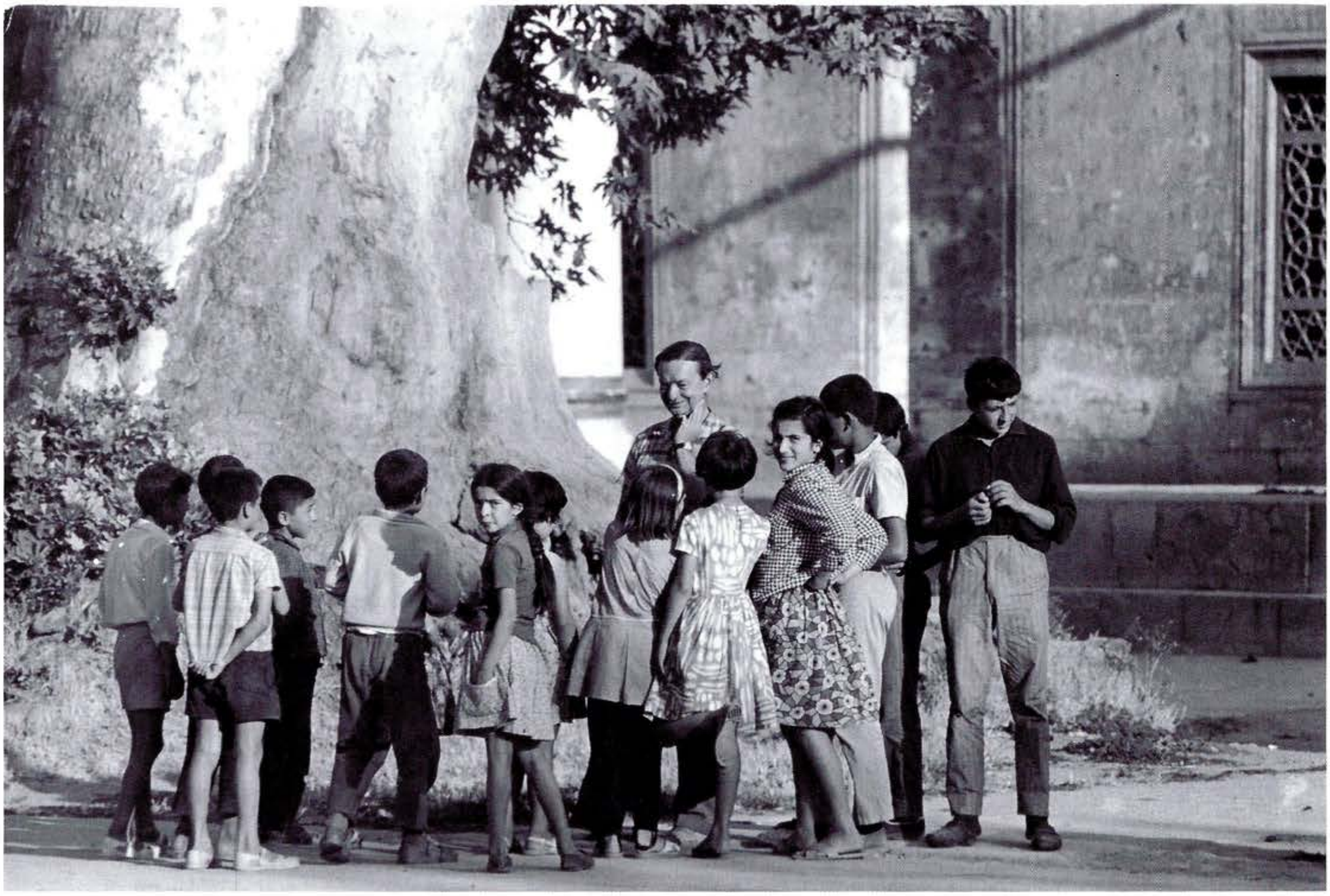
"If you must make noise on a Sunday morning, and I suppose you must, could I perhaps persuade you to decamp to a distant land, populated, if at all possible, by my worst enemies, whose names I would be more than happy to provide forthwith?"

Or words to that effect. Adults wanting to get along with children tend to do so by condescending to them: with Godfrey it was always the opposite. He knew you would understand him perfectly, no matter how elaborate his syntax; the question was whether or not he could return the compliment. "Where shall we begin?" he would ask, when he'd tired of the adults at Christmas dinner and defected to the children's table. As he adjusted his monocle – and he had every reason to use one, for he was blind in one eye – we'd give him our suggestions. And then, for the next few hours, we'd watch him drawing hobgoblins in vast tableaux of tilting buildings, crashing planes, wobbling space-ships and ocean liners battling the waves.

He spent the early years of his own childhood in Portugal, where his father was managing director of the company that built Lisbon's trams, and where, we were led to believe, scenes of high drama were commonplace. Recalling this turbulent period, Godfrey's mother once told us how the family was sitting together one evening, reading and sewing to the tune of a distant thunderstorm, when one of them looked up and said, "Goodness! Listen to the bombs!" After his father died of tuberculosis, the family returned to England, where Godfrey was despatched to a series of schools that left him with a seething contempt for received opinion and his own ideas about respect, truth, beauty, justice and just about everything else his teachers had found unworthy of comment.

After leaving Clifton College, he studied briefly at the French Institute and at RADA. An artistic uncle in Montparnasse gave him his first entrée to the world of art. He enlisted in 1939, fought in North Africa, and in the last months of World War II found himself in Italy, where, while motoring through the countryside, he had the unexpected pleasure of turning a corner to find an entire battalion of Germans waving white flags and wishing to surrender to him. He declined, though he directed them to a major-general he thought might be more obliging. Billeted in a village in southern Italy about which he knew nothing, but which seemed to be at the end of a tramline, he decided to take the tram one afternoon, just to see where it might take him. He ended up in Rome, which was not quite liberated. Here he met Lianna Ferri, a glamorous left-wing journalist, who gave him his first introduction to the soon-to-be postwar intelligentsia.

He eventually returned to England, but he did not stay long. Though he visited Italy religiously for the rest of his life, his true home away from home became the eastern Mediterranean. He came to Istanbul via Alexandria, in 1952, and to Robert College via the English high school in Nişantaşı, in 1956, but, like his more discerning colleagues, he refused to cloister himself on campus. He got into the



THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN GODFREY GOODWIN WITH AN ADMIRING AUDIENCE IN ISTANBUL'S BEYAZIT SQUARE IN THE SIXTIES

habit of taking large groups of friends on walks through the Old City every Saturday afternoon, and he spent many evenings in Beyoğlu, where he had made some very interesting friends – among them the artist Aliye Berger-Boronai (whose family inspired a yet-to-be-published novel). There was also the growing army of interesting students, many of whom, like the artist Özer Kabaş, went on to become close friends. Invitations to his modest but elegant bachelor pad in Hamlin Hall were much sought after, for even if the unusual mix of guests left some speechless during the first few minutes, his famous punch (falsely said to be strawberries floating in pure alcohol) soon cured them of their shyness.

The British consulate often asked him to take visiting dignitaries on a tour of the city. One such dignitary was Lord Chorley, who'd brought along his daughter Gillian, as his wife did not like to travel. Godfrey invited Gillian to one of his parties. She insisted on staying to do the washing-up. In 1965, they were married. In 1968, they returned to London, where their son Bertie was born soon afterwards.

By then they had set up house in Chalcot Square, in a tall and narrow house that was not quite large enough for Godfrey's eclectic art collection. In the mid-Seventies, when I first moved to London, I lived for a time in the room in their attic. This was when I attended the first of their famous dinner parties – splendid six- and seven-course spreads, courtesy of Gillian, who was, among many other things, a culinary historian, and a dizzying succession of fine wines, courtesy of Godfrey. Though the mix of guests was always unusual – archeologists and musicologists, historians and television producers, teachers and former students, heads of research from Amnesty International and tongue-tied children of family friends from Istanbul – no one (except me) ever lost the conversational thread. I can remember Gillian passing around the salmon pâté or the daube or the raisin pudding that, according to a book she'd just found in a little-known archive, had been popular during the Middle Ages, but still listening intently to a discussion about a recent auction at Sotheby's.

"I'm not quite sure I would agree," she said crisply. "One only has to think how the price of Botticellis went up and down throughout the nineteenth century."

"One could, if one wished, choose to go down that path," I remember Godfrey replying. "But that would be to ignore the obvious."

The next morning, I came down to find him sitting at the same table with his son Bertie and the almost life-sized model of a Human Torso that usually

'You have a choice,' he told me and my twelve-year-old daughter the last time he cooked for us. 'We can start with a rather nice champagne and move on to a rather nice claret. Or we can drink champagne all evening, which might be even nicer!'

stood on the chest next to the wall. Bertie, who must have been about eight at the time, was pressing on the little screws that were, as he pointed out, just where the nipples should have been. As he removed the lungs that had been keeping him from getting a really good look at the circulatory system, he asked his father if they had any purpose other than to keep people breathing. As Godfrey passed me the orange marmalade (Seville '76, said Gillian's neatly lettered label), he looked at me very sadly and asked, "I don't suppose that, somewhere in the course of your travels, you picked up a few interesting facts about lungs?" I hadn't. "And quite right, too," he sighed, as he put on his coat.

Then he walked across London, to Bevington School in North Kensington, where he was the deputy head teacher. Most of the children were from immigrant families and discipline was a problem. His solution was to instruct teachers not to let misbehaving students disrupt the class, but to send them straight to his office. Here he would have them look at the fish in his aquarium. When they had calmed down, he would ask them what they wanted him to draw. While he drew, they would have a chat – not about discipline, but about their likes and dislikes, their lives and travels.

Godfrey, Gillian and Bertie were themselves intrepid and resourceful travellers, even when they stayed close to home. They were members of the Landmark Trust, through which they were able (by booking months and sometimes even years ahead) to spend most of Bertie's half terms in historic cottages, manors and stately homes through the British Isles. There cannot be a boy in England who saw so much of his national heritage at such close hand, and at such an early age.

They also travelled widely in Europe, North America and, most of all, Turkey. Wherever they went, they met an interesting and unusual mix of people. Once, when Godfrey and Gillian were travelling in the southeast of Turkey, an interesting boy asked if they would mind giving him a lift to the next town on their itinerary. Of course, they said graciously. As they were driving through the barren hills, they turned the corner to find Kurdish warriors approaching them on horseback at great speed. They thought it was all over, but then the boy in the back seat stuck his head out of the window and cried, "Baba! Baba!" For the leader was his father. Once they'd been properly introduced, he insisted on escorting the Goodwins to the safety of his village, where they were fêted and fed and lodged for the night.

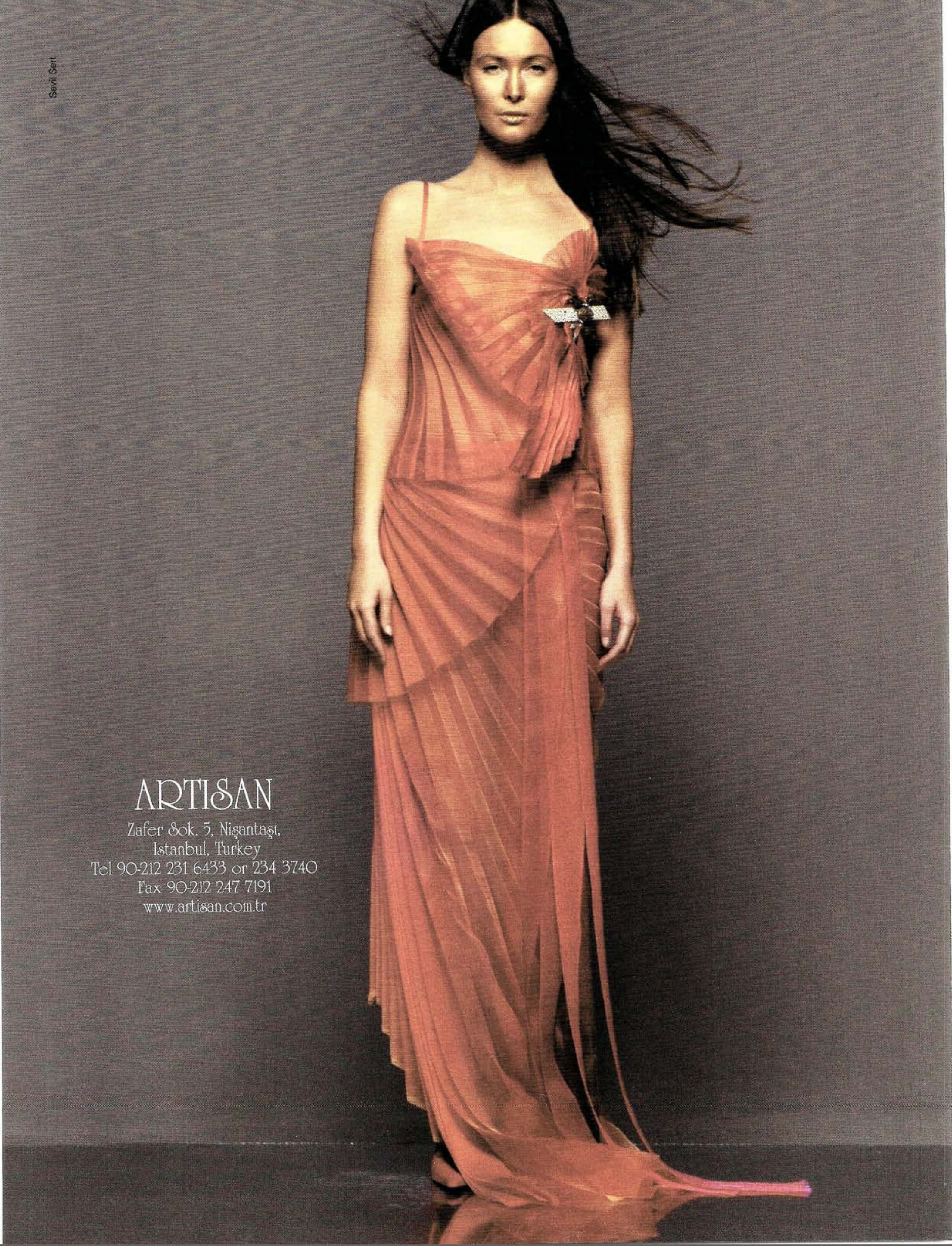
In the early Eighties, when they visited us in San Francisco, there was an earthquake. Though it measured only 5.8, it caused our tall, narrow apartment building to lurch so violently I thought it was about to crack. As I stood whimpering under an inner archway, watching the tower on the top of Telegraph Hill come swaying towards us, and then swooping back towards the bay, Gillian remained on the tiny balcony reading. Not once did she look up from her book. Later, when I asked her how and why, she said, "I tend to be rather fatalistic about such things." And quite right, too.

When Gillian died, quietly and stoically and long before her time, in 2000, Godfrey was almost eighty. His health was fragile, and he must have known he had only a few years left. He spent them well, wisely insisting on doing only what he loved most. He turned the tall, narrow house on Chalcot Square over to Bertie, moving into the little ground floor flat that had once been his mother's, but it was soon looking as elegant as his old bachelor flat in Hamlin Hall. Though there was no proper kitchen, and though his shaking hands made it difficult for him to manage his little hob, he continued to entertain, always with the old Godfrey panache. "You have a choice to make," he told me and my twelve-year-old daughter the last time he cooked for us. "We can start with a rather nice champagne and move on to a rather nice claret. Or we can drink champagne all evening, which might be even nicer!"

He returned every summer to Istanbul, where, with the help of his loyal assistant, Mehmet Alagöz, he taught two courses at Boğaziçi University. One was on Byzantine architecture, the other on Ottoman architecture, and each involved weekly field trips to the monuments he knew and loved so well. The pace was gruelling, but he still found time for his friends, who by now ranged in age from two to ninety-five, and who were expected to treat each other with the same courteous interest he accorded to everyone he entertained – preferably on the terrace of the Hotel Bebek, where the drinks were very expensive but of a quality to make money no object, and where the waiters always made sure he had a chair facing the Bosphorus.

He'd often said he wanted to die walking back up the hill to the campus. When the end came, it was almost that sudden. He fell ill in June, and died in mid-August, while many of us were still away on holiday. He gave his body to science. "For goodness' sake," he told his son Bertie, "don't waste money on a funeral. Spend it all on champagne and a party to remember me by." His final wish was that "it shouldn't run out".

His last two days of lucidity came after Bertie gave him a few sips of Cos d'Estournel one evening, and on the following evening a few drops of vintage champagne. He continued to dine out, and dine well, until two weeks before he died. One of his last trips was to his favourite Turkish restaurant, in Primrose Hill, just round the corner from Chalcot Square. The two old friends who'd arranged the outing with the nursing home staff had phoned ahead to the restaurant, so that they'd have his favourite table waiting for them. Alarmed to hear of his illness – for they were his friends, too – the entire staff came out to the street to greet him. How the rest of us wish we could do the same now. ◆



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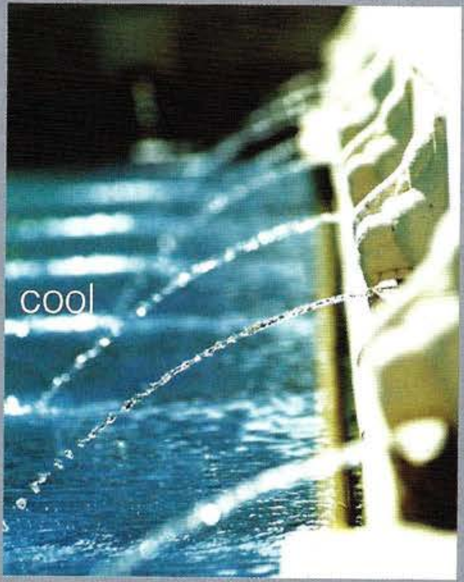

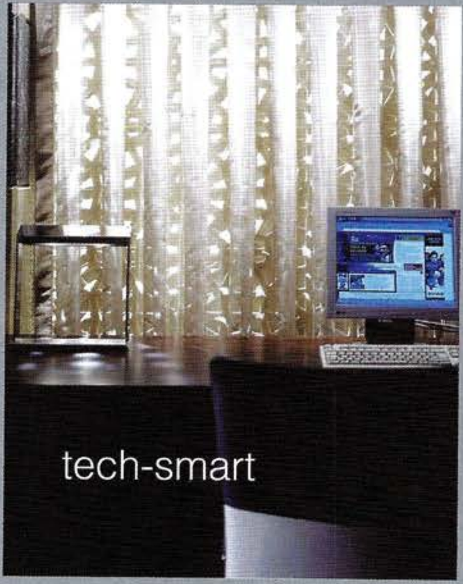

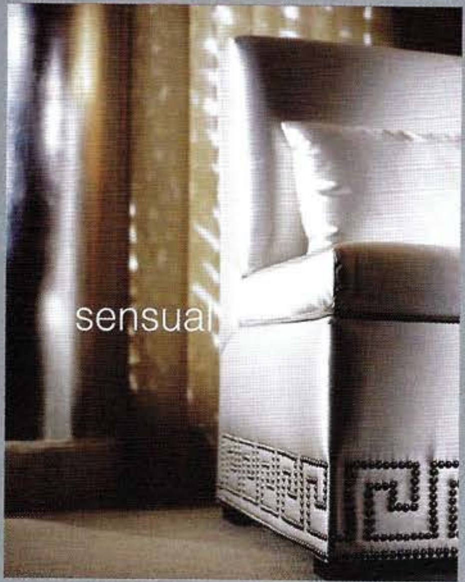

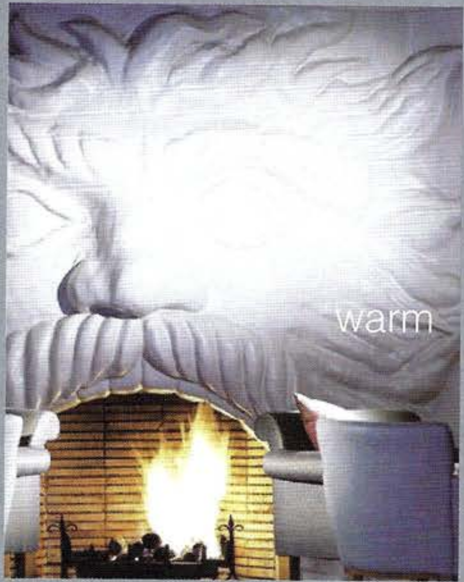

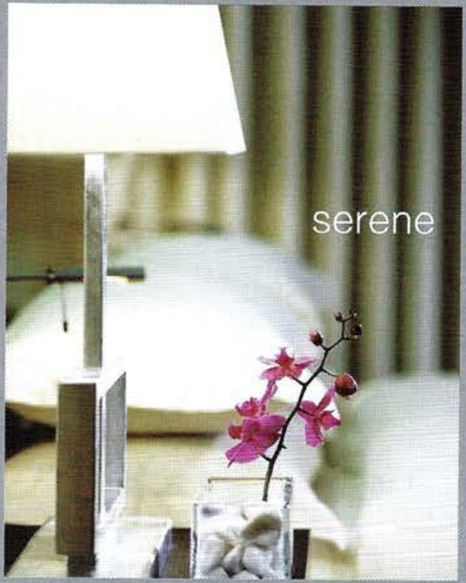

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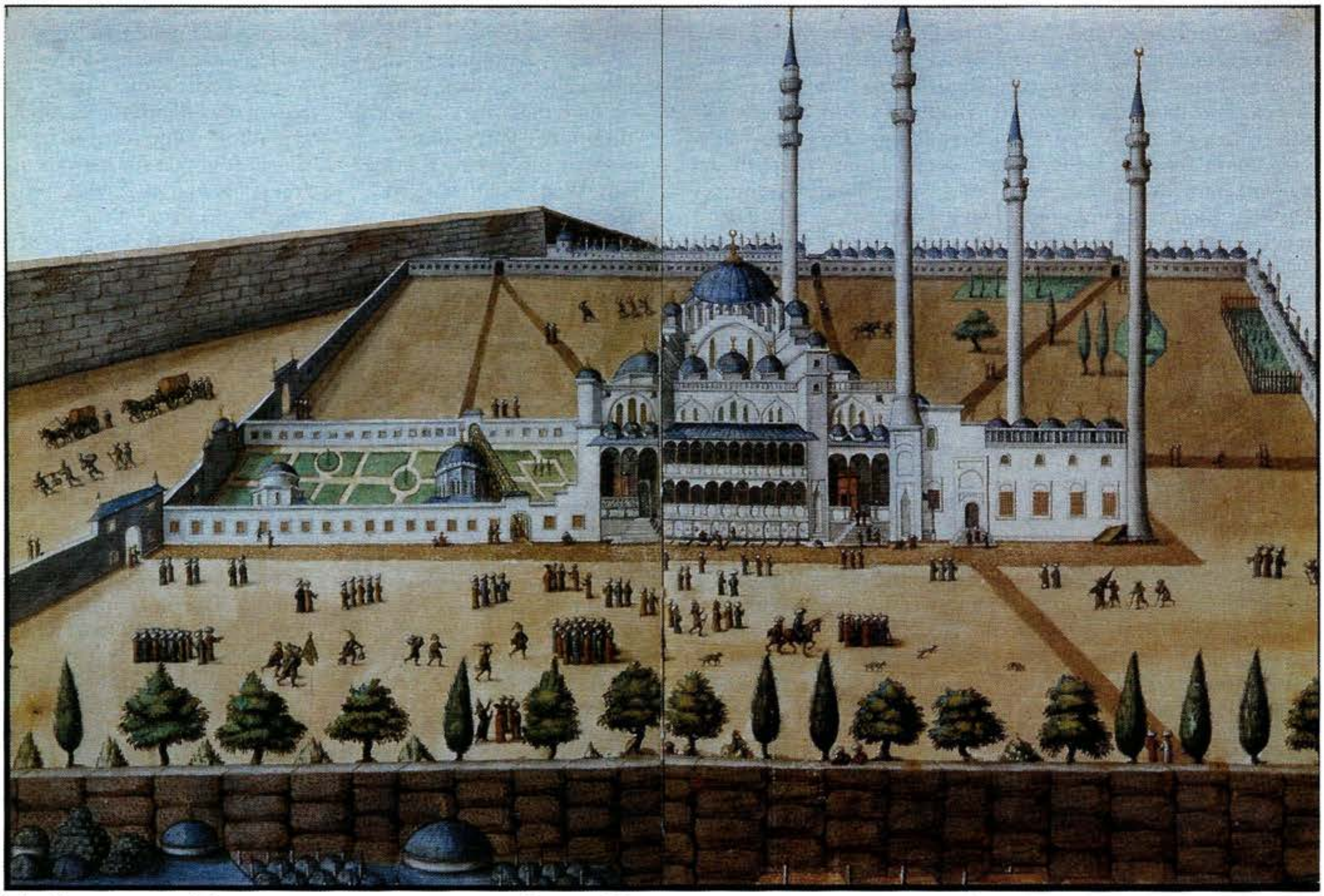
Tim Stanley on an impressive new book on Sinan, Ilber Ortaylı on a new history of the Ottomans in the classical mould, David Barchard on travelling Orientals and Orientalists. Plus reviews by Robert Ousterhout, Berrin Torolsan and Andrew Finkel

BOOKS



THE SÜLEYMANIYE MOSQUE SEEN FROM ACROSS THE GOLDEN HORN DEPICTED BY AN ANONYMOUS AUSTRIAN ARTIST IN 1590

Sinan the magnificent

BY TIM STANLEY

The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire
By Gülru Necipoğlu
Reaktion Books, £60

The sixteenth century was without doubt the high point in Turkish history. In the 1510s the state formed by earlier Ottoman sultans in Anatolia and the Balkans burst out of these bounds, seizing territories on every front and forcing the world to recognise it as a great power. The empire's resources increased by leaps and bounds, and under Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) the new wealth began to be spent on ambitious architectural projects that radically changed the appearance of Istanbul, the capital, and other cities.

To do architecture well, though, you need a good architect, and, as Professor Necipoğlu shows in her extraordinary new book, architects of any kind were in short supply at the Ottoman court in 1539, when the chief architect, Acem Alisi, died. So the grand vizier, Lutfi Pasha, turned to an outsider. The man in question was a Janissary officer called Sinan Subaşı, who had trained as a carpenter and then proved himself in the field by working on a grand scale. He was an excellent organiser, with the ability to build large siege-engines and erect long bridges to a high standard and on time.

Sinan held the post of chief architect for fifty years, until his death in 1588. His achievements in that time were truly impressive. He refined the way his subordinates operated, turning his workforce into a remarkably effective means of delivering huge projects. He was responsible for the design and, in many cases, the construction of an enormous number of buildings, including a seemingly unending sequence of Friday mosques. These, he tells us, gave him the greatest pride.

Sinan generally covered his mosques

with a single large dome, retaining the format inherited from his predecessors. But he showed greater mastery of the mechanics involved. He built sounder foundations and varied the support systems, allowing new and more elegant solutions to old structural problems. One result was that, although he made his domes larger, he was able to make them look as though they rested on very little. For he filled the walls below them with windows, so that they flooded the interior with light and distracted the eye from massive masonry with gracious arcading.

Sinan was also a successful self-publicist, dictating several versions of an authorised account of his own life to an assistant, and these have remained a key source on his work and his attitudes to it. Gülru Necipoğlu's new book, *The Age of Sinan*, might be taken as a continuation of this tradition of biography, like several before it. Yet it is not.

Yes, the word SINAN is written in letters two centimetres high on the dust jacket, dwarfing the rest of the title. And yes, Sinan's personal history and his brilliance as an organiser, engineer, architect and propagandist form a key part of the narrative. But the book contains a great deal more. As its subtitle proclaims, the author set out to depict the whole architectural culture of the Ottoman Empire in Sinan's time, and not just this one great architect's role in it.

An illuminating point is Necipoğlu's reaction to the debate over Sinan's ethnic origin. Basically the question is: was he Greek or was he Armenian? Preoccupation with this issue is, we are told, "a largely misguided and anachronistic exercise". Why? Because Sinan cared so little about it that he didn't bother to tell us. In his own writings, he is always a good Muslim, making buildings for a good Muslim ruler.

Islam forms a very significant part of the cultural context of Sinan's work, which reflected a complex web of connected political, social, economic and aesthetic factors. This cultural context has, though, been underplayed in much previous writing on Ottoman architecture. Instead Sinan has been portrayed as a figure working within a self-contained world. Sometimes his buildings appear merely as the emanations of his brilliant mind: with limitless resources at his disposal, he was able to realise every subtle variation that occurred to him. Sometimes his work is seen as the sublime but inevitable culmination of the work of previous generations of Ottoman architects, who shared with Sinan an inborn need to construct a perfect domed hall of immense size. There is an element of truth in all these interpretations. However, they are only partial truths, and they are missing the glue to hold them together.

Necipoğlu has now gone a long way to putting this right, providing a remarkable work of synthesis, devoted primarily to Sinan's major mosques. It forms an enormous volume of 592 pages, with 546 illustrations and five maps. In it she has compiled and reordered all the useful observations made previously; she has re-examined the standard sources, viewing them critically but without obvious prejudice; and she has added an immense amount of information gleaned from the buildings themselves, from archival documents, and from a wide range of narrative sources. The results can be enlightening.

The book is divided into three parts. The first surveys the process of architectural patronage. For example, who had the money? Well, primarily the sultan, and, after him, his relatives and his leading servants. By Sinan's time, the latter were almost entirely men of servile origin who had been allowed to marry into the sultan's family. But, despite their power, they were subject to a variety of rules. One set came from the Shari'ah, defining the circumstances in which a mosque could be built. Others were less tangible.

A useful concept that Necipoğlu introduces in this section is that of architectural "decorum". This was an informal, and slowly shifting, body of opinion that acted rather like building regulations. It determined what type of mosque or house a person might build according to his or her social rank. It has long been known, for example, that only a sultan was allowed to build a mosque with a courtyard. It had also been clear that some high-ranking patrons circumvented this principle by having U-shaped *medreses* built in front of their mosques to create a substitute courtyard. What was less clear is that these examples fitted into a complex of rules that had to be negotiated by all Sinan's patrons.

In this section, too, Necipoğlu examines the aesthetic traditions to which Sinan and his patrons had access. These, she suggests, were more varied than we may have presumed. Through his service on campaign, for example, Sinan would have been able to see a great many historical monuments in Iraq and Iran, such as the tomb of the Mongol ruler Oljaytu in Sultaniyyah. At the same time, the number of Western diplomatic and other residents in Istanbul meant that he may have been able to learn about architecture in Europe secondhand. In any case, the availability of imported prints and printed books in Istanbul meant that Sinan would have been able to keep abreast of contemporary developments in Italy if he so wished.

While the first part of the book deals with issues of patronage, the second part is a closely argued discussion of Sinan's biography and of the administrative framework within which he worked. In other words, it describes how the patron's wishes were put into effect. The third part describes the result. It consists of studies of more than sixty of his buildings, arranged hierarchically rather than regionally or chronologically, with those commissioned by the most important patrons (the sultans) first. As the relative grandeur of the buildings reflects the status of the people who commissioned them, this arrangement is also in tune with contemporary views of architectural "decorum".

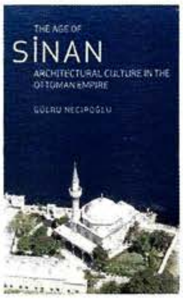
The third part of the book is, in fact, a massive work of reference in its own right. Many of the buildings are covered in a page or so, but no fewer than nineteen pages are devoted to the Selimiye in Edirne, which is illustrated in a ground plan, an isometric projection, two photographs from the air, eight external photographs taken at ground level, a drawing of the north façade by Sedat Çetintaş, and thirteen photographs of the interior. On one level, we have to be grateful for coverage on this scale, but on another it contributes to the enormous size and weight of *The Age of Sinan*, which may hinder its use by ordinary mortals.

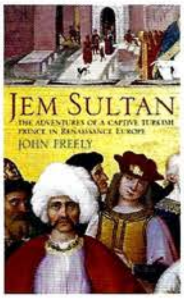
Battles do count

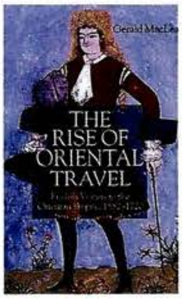
BY ILBER ORTAYLI

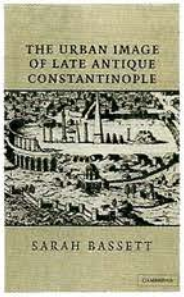
Osman's Dream:
The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923
By Caroline Finkel
John Murray, £30

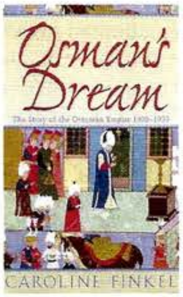
Osman's Dream is at heart a romantic book in the grand old tradition of historical narrative. It traces the story of the Ottoman dynasty



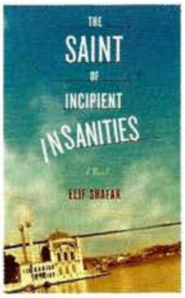

JEM SULTAN
THE ADVENTURES OF A CAPTIVE TURKISH PRINCE IN RENAISSANCE EUROPE
JOHN FREELY







A King's Confectioner in the Orient
FRIEDRICH UNGER
PRISCILLA MARY IŞIN



from its small-scale start in northwestern Anatolia in the fourteenth century straight through the great period until 1700, then on, through the era of decline, ending with the First World War and the end of the dynasty. The approach is firmly and unrepentantly narrative, taking in battles, court conspiracies and international treaties as a matter of course. This is a tradition that many of Caroline Finkel's contemporaries dismiss almost automatically as hopelessly obsolete. But if accepted in its own terms, it can result, as here, in books that are beautifully executed and extremely useful.

The great European historians Hammer von Purgstall and JW Zinkeisen, and our own equivalents, IH Uzunçarşılı, Ahmet Rasim or Server Iskit, set the pattern, but modern Turkish historians have mainly abandoned an interest in political or military chronicle, finding such tales dull and meaningless. What they really mean is that such chronicles are exceedingly difficult to bring off: how do you combine description and analysis? The fashion has been, latterly, for fuzzily conceived "social histories" drawing upon a great multitude of sources that nevertheless have yet to be given proper evaluation.

Caroline Finkel knows, of course, about depth, about cultures, about difficult sources (not only can she read the Ottoman ones, she can even make a stab at Hungarian), but concern for the profundities does not prevent her from moving her craft rapidly and skilfully across the surface. So, from obscure beginnings on the frontiers of the Byzantine empire, the Ottomans became the successors of Rome (and Istanbul was called by them "Konstantiniye" to the end).

When we speak of a society's history we are speaking of its fate, and people who were alive at any historical time were well and truly aware that dramas were under way that would affect them directly – forget the *longue durée* allegedly making this or that outcome inevitable. Battles and treaties mattered: they could have an impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

The unlucky prince

By David Barchard

Jem Sultan: The Adventures of a Captive Turkish Prince in Renaissance Europe
By John Freely
HarperCollins, £18.99

The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580–1720
By Gerald MacLean
Palgrave Macmillan, £40

Cem Sultan, the fifteenth-century Ottoman prince who was the younger son of Mehmet the Conqueror, was one of those unlucky individuals who seem destined to become great rulers but never get the chance. Indeed it is probable that if he had defeated his elder brother, Beyazit II, and become sultan, he would have driven the Ottoman Empire's frontiers westward and perhaps, since Italy was one of the main Ottoman targets, might one day have ridden on horseback as conqueror into the Old Rome – just as his father, Mehmet II, rode into the New Rome of Istanbul – and even turned St Peter's into a mosque.

It was not to be. Beyazit beat Cem (who here becomes Jem for reasons of pronunciation) in the race to capture the throne after Mehmet II's death in 1481. Without an army, Cem fled first to Egypt and then later to the Knights of Rhodes. They broke their promise to let him travel freely. So instead of heading invading armies, Cem spent almost all his adult years, over a third of his life, first as a prisoner of the French and then of the Pope. They used him as a bargaining chip with Beyazit to fend off the Ottoman military challenge.

The Ottoman prince in his turban in Rome makes an extraordinary contrast with the Renaissance figures that flit past him in John Freely's latest book. Cem was painted several times, so we know fairly exactly what he looked like. Perhaps it is because we know so little else about him – though we do have some poems he wrote in exile – that Cem appears to be the only upright figure in a dazzling cast which otherwise consists of unscrupulous and bent individuals to whom, rather surprisingly, we owe this most glorious period in the arts.

In Rome, Cem was held captive by two popes and their sons in turn. Sons of popes? Well, yes – in the closing decades of the fifteenth century the papacy was going through a spell of deep corruption. Luckily for Cem, Renaissance prelates were more adept at enjoying life than practising their religion, and so his time in the Vatican did not pass without a fair range of worldly delights. One papal son, a member of the Borgia family, went hunting with Cem. Even the Renaissance composer Josquin Després, who must have seen Cem from close by in the papal choir, has a minor part in this story.

Manly but a little fearsome, and always conscious of his superiority as an Ottoman Muslim, Cem was sometimes depressed but never lost his dignity. But of course he was doomed. Though his brother's attempts over the years to have him assassinated were easily foiled, Cem's end came very abruptly.

In late 1496, Charles VIII of France invaded Rome. He demanded, and was given, custody of Cem, who was treated with great honour and led south with the French armies. But within a month, Cem was dead of a sudden but apparently genuine illness. He was only thirty-four. Just over four years later, his body was taken back to

Turkey and he is honourably buried beside his grandfather, Murat II, in the Muradiye Mosque in Bursa.

Stories of romantic royal prisoners are always a source of fascination and legends. Cem's years in Europe are no exception. This is an excellent account of his captivity for the general reader, and it is enriched by John Freely's expertise as a traveller, writer and art historian, though one wishes that HarperCollins had stuck to the usual spelling of the prince's name.

Cem Sultan was an Ottoman traveller in Western lands but one who, alas, left no books or travel diaries behind him. Gerald MacLean's *The Rise of Oriental Travel* deals with later English travellers in Ottoman lands whose memoirs we are still able to tap into. MacLean focuses on four travellers – Thomas Dallam, a Lancastrian organ-builder, who arrived in Istanbul in 1599 with an organ that was to be presented to Murat III as a diplomatic gift from Elizabeth I; William Biddulph, a Protestant clergyman in early sixteenth-century Aleppo; Sir Henry Blunt, an English diplomat of the 1630s; and an anonymous English captive in North Africa during the reign of Charles II.

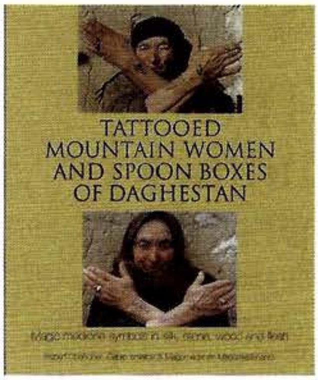
Though they have little in common, this bunch make up a sure-fire success for the reader. Dallam gets to see the Ottoman harem (he really did); the clergyman Biddulph takes a dim view of the Middle East and its inhabitants; Blunt drinks coffee with an Ottoman pasha at the request of one of his pages; and MacLean, who piles bold speculation upon frantic surmise in his eagerness to investigate what he calls "the erotic possibilities of the Ottoman Mediterranean", immediately tries to work out who is making a pass at whom. He is convinced that someone is – and it certainly makes a limited story more interesting if we assume that there are layers of meaning we can never entirely reach.

Finally we get to the anonymous TS and his racy adventures in the barely Ottoman sands of North Africa. Frankly, he seems less interesting than the others. TS's boastful accounts of what he got up to while a slave seem about as unbelievable as his claim to have encountered a "counterfeit lamb" with a wolf-like head, a fleece and the ability to change its colour and shape at will. Does this advance our understanding of Ottoman–Western contacts? MacLean might have done better to pick another traveller and one who stayed closer to the Ottoman heartlands.

The Rise of Oriental Travel might also have done with more historical and anthropological background, but there are lots of good things in it. It opens up a vanished world.

BODY LANGUAGE

In the southernmost border of the Russian Federation lies Daghestan, a land of ancient villages perched among the Great Caucasian Mountains by the shores of the Caspian Sea. In this rural Islamic society, animist tattoos on women – descendants of the Amazons – and decoration on ritual spoon-boxes share symbols that are believed to protect the hearth and the family. Three experts have recorded this fascinating system of folk medicine, allowing the women's own voices to reveal the living vocabulary of their hidden body language. The resulting volume – which bears the awesome subtitle Magic Medicine Symbols in Silk, Stone, Wood and Flesh – *provides a key to the symbols adorning spoon-boxes and other original objects found in Daghestan and throughout the carpet world. More than 120 colour images and 180 tattoos specially drawn by Alex Binnie illustrate this unique and vanishing art.*



Tattooed Mountain Women and Spoon-Boxes of Daghestan
By Robert Chenciner, Gabib Ismailov and Magomedkhan Magomedkhanov. (Bennett & Bloom, London, £19.99)

Beware: falling idols

BY ROBERT OUSTERHOUT

The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople
By Sarah Bassett
Cambridge University Press, £55

Consider this curious incident from eighth-century Constantinople: while two local scholars were examining an ancient statue, it toppled from its pedestal and squashed one of them. In the official inquiry that followed – for there was suspicion of murder – a philosopher declared after examining the base of the statue that "by divine providence, I find it so in the writings of Demosthenes, that a man of rank would be killed by a statue". The author who recorded these events concluded: "Take care when you look at old statues, especially pagan ones."

Byzantine history is full of similarly amusing stories. By the eighth century, the public statuary of Constantinople seems to have lost its original meaning and had come to be regarded as talismanic or a source of magic. With a few exceptions, ancient statues were regarded as vaguely sinister, capable of harm and at best avoided. For example, the life of St Andrew the Fool tells of a woman who became possessed by the demons that inhabited statues (presumably male and nude) in the Hippodrome, who urged her to have intercourse with them. The life of St Euthemius relates that the Emperor Alexander, upon becoming impotent, was instructed by magicians to clothe these statues in sumptuous garments and burn incense before them, and to provide a statue of the Calydonian Boar with teeth and genitals. Some centuries later, the Empress Euphrosyne, who was addicted to magic and divination, cut off the snout of the same Calydonian Boar. She also had a statue of Hercules flogged and had others broken and dismembered. During the attack on Constantinople in 1204, the populace destroyed a statue of Athena in the Forum of Constantine because her gesture was interpreted as beckoning to the crusaders to come on in.

What is noteworthy in all this nonsense is that the original purposes and messages of the statues – such as imperial victory, civic virtue and even urban beautification – had long since been forgotten and had been replaced by a folkloristic significance. It is a good indication of the transformation of Constantinople from an ancient city to a medieval one which had lost connection with its own past.

Several centuries earlier, statues and public art had been a critical component in the foundation of the city by Constantine, c 324–330 AD. A new creation, like Washington DC or St Petersburg, it was a capital city built virtually from scratch.

The novelty of the new capital allowed Constantine and his successors freedom in the deliberate crafting of a ritual site, as a setting for the imperial ceremonial that guaranteed *taxis* – the order of the well-governed cosmos.

In the early centuries, much of Constantinople's identity was by necessity imported – in the form of relics and monuments, and the legends that came with them. Sarah Bassett's study of the reuse of ancient sculpture in early Constantinople offers a unique approach to the creation of a civic identity in the Late Antique period, and an important reassessment of the foundation of the Byzantine capital. Constantine's new city was decorated with statues brought from all parts of the empire.

Public monuments and statuary were part and parcel of any Late Antique city, necessary elements of its public spaces. They provided an element of urban beautification and formed part of the backdrop for public urban life. Both pagans and Christians of the fourth to sixth centuries were raised in an atmosphere of visual imagery that was part of the legacy of classical culture.

But statues and monuments also bore messages. They were part of the "advertising" that connected the ruler to the people, asserted the hierarchy of order within the empire, and gave meaning to place. Visual imagery was an integral part of pagan and Christian religions as well. Graeco-Roman religious rituals often had a statue as the focus of devotion; learned Christians could appreciate the aesthetic qualities of classical sculpture devoid of it religious context, but also understood images as powerful vehicles of communication. In fact, the "power of images" was one of the factors leading to the Iconoclast debates of the eighth century.

Bassett's study is important for several reasons. Although Constantinople was the most important city of the medieval Mediterranean, scholars are poorly informed about its physical fabric – in effect, it is a city without a visual image. Studied primarily from texts, rather than from monuments, the Byzantine city has traditionally been the domain of the philologist rather than the archaeologist. Our most important books about Constantinople (such as the standard texts of Mango, Dagron and Magdalino), no matter how evocative, are virtually unillustrated. Our knowledge of Byzantine Constantinople can hardly compare with what classicists know about ancient Athens or Rome. Constantinople has not benefited from the decades of careful, systematic excavations these cities have enjoyed, which have provided vivid images of the settings for the important events of antiquity.

Bassett takes an important step towards redressing this imbalance. As she explains, Constantinople in its heyday was full of evocative visual images that played a major role in constructing its identity. She demonstrates that much of the imported ancient figural sculpture was carefully selected for public display. Unfortunately, most of the reused antiquities are known only from texts, and often only from brief or garbled references, which have been used and abused selectively by scholars. Bassett provides a complete list for the first time and, more than just telling us where they were and what they looked like, she situates them within the ideological framework of the new capital.

Particularly good is the insistence on Constantinople as an imperial capital not simply as a pagan city or as a Christian city, but one in which both churches and temples were necessary, it seems, in equal number. To be a capital it required a Capitolium. Bassett's is the best explanation I have read of the necessity for temples in a city built to be a Christian capital. Moreover, she presents evidence from the law codes of Theodosius to suggest a less single-minded attitude towards pagan construction. For example, an edict directed at the city of Edessa, dated 382, indicates that the sacrifices should cease but that the temple should remain open, "for the common use of the people", its contents "measured by the value of their art rather than by their divinity". The emphasis on aesthetics and appreciation of art for art's sake suggests the degree of nuance still possible in the growing polarity between pagans and Christians.

Bassett thus adds needed shading to the debate about Constantine's personal acceptance of Christianity, and the ambiguity in his public actions and patronage. In a capital it would have been necessary for public Roman ritual to continue, with all its trappings. Constantine rebuilt and rededicated pagan temples. In fact, Bassett seems to understand this better than did Constantine's very Christian biographer Eusebius, who was hard-pressed to explain Constantine's erection of pagan statues, lamely suggesting that it was all part of a subtle policy to make fun of the old gods.

Public ensembles of statuary imported in Constantine's day were, according to Bassett, "conceived largely in historical terms", to emphasise the historical links with Rome and the dominion of Constantine, to make the city a New Rome. Thus, in the Hippodrome there were images of victory – both military and sporting – and statues which made association with the Roman past (such as Aeneas; the she-wolf with Romulus and Remus; Augustus, Julius Caesar, Diocletian) to evoke memories of the golden age of imperial greatness and to foster the idea that the empire would regain its past glory.

But early Constantinople could also be viewed as "New Troy" – that is, the legendary ancestral home of the Romans in the East, from which Aeneas fled following its sack by the Greeks. According to several early Byzantine historians, Constantine had considered establishing his new capital at the site of Troy itself, on the Dardanelles rather than on the Bosphorus. Many of the public statues brought in to decorate the early city refer specifically to the Trojan legend, such as the ensemble that decorated the Baths of Zeuxippos at the entrance to the Great Palace. And Byzantine writers claimed that the colossal statue of Constantine as Apollo-Helios, set at the centre of his Forum, had been brought from Troy itself. As Sarah Bassett argues, early Constantinople was very much an intellectual creation, one that "grew up around the intersection of history and myth ... that makes the city the last link in a chain of destiny that stretched from Troy to Rome."

New Rome and New Troy: it's heady stuff. But neither of these ideas existed prior to the time of Constantine; they were consciously constructed. The success of Constantine's "invention" may be best judged by the fact that the myths and legends promulgated by the collections of statues long outlived the imported works of art. When the city was again "reinvented" by Mehmet the Conqueror after 1453, most of the statues were gone, but the associations with Rome and Troy were still vivid – so much so that Mehmet claimed descent from the Trojans and viewed his conquest of the Byzantine Empire as vengeance against the Greeks for their injustices against the Trojans and other Asiatics in centuries past. One wonders if Mehmet could possibly have read Sarah Bassett's book.

Confections of a globetrotter

BY BERRIN TOROLSAN

A King's Confectioner in the Orient, by Friedrich Unger,
Court Confectioner to
King Otto I of Greece,
Edited and with a commentary by Priscilla Mary Işın
Kegan Paul, £65

From the turmoils of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, plague and famine, a new society emerged in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century that espoused new values, new styles of living and new culinary habits. The celebrity chef was created to meet its demands for ever more extravagant feasts.

Stars such as Escoffier, Carême and later Soyer, most of them French in origin, moved from one European palace kitchen to another, conducting an army of underchefs, to feed their wealthy or aristocratic employers and the jet-set of their day. These chefs contributed largely to the evolution of Western *haute cuisine*. Classic sauces such as roux-based *béchamel* or egg-based *hollandaise* were introduced during this period. The excessive use of spices was abandoned and menus started to include more fresh vegetables and fruit. Desserts, puddings, sorbets and jellies became works of art, and dinner tables groaned beneath centrepieces sculpted from sugar and piled high with marzipan fruits and flowers and bows of candyfloss ribbon. (Today's tall, layered wedding cakes are the modest descendants of those gigantic displays.)

Although this *cuisine nouvelle*, as it was called, was grounded in French culture, it owed its finesse to borrowings from the refined and prosperous cultures of the Orient. The Ottoman Empire was an unrivalled source of inspiration for the select, and highly competitive, band of chefs employed by European sovereigns. One such was Friedrich Unger, chief confectioner to the German-born King Otto of Greece, who travelled with his master to his new home in Athens and used the opportunity to visit Constantinople, heart of the Morgenland and a byword for luxury and exoticism.

Unger's book on Oriental confectionery, *Conditorei des Orients*, was written in 1837, after five years spent researching the subject. Although his tone can be high-handed, Unger is observant and precise. Describing pistachio sherbet, for instance, we learn that "the natural green colour" is "restored with spinach". His Teutonic attention to minor detail and his wealth of recipes give a valuable insight into nineteenth-century Turkish confectionery.

Equally painstaking has been the book's rebirth. In 1982, Mary Işın, who has devoted years to researching the history of Turkish cuisine, heard a rumour about the existence of the book. Excited, she began to search for it. For eight years it remained no more than a rumour, until it finally surfaced in the Staatsbibliotek in Munich. Translating the text from German, researching all the entries and adding informative footnotes took another three years. Ingredients and methods had to be investigated, and all sorts of people consulted – professionals, housewives, friends, and elderly people with memories of vanished customs. Işın also had to try out many of the recipes herself.

The quotations from travellers, writers and cookery books old and new, as well as her own personal observations, plus reproduction of miniatures and illustrations of utensils and ingredients, have all transformed this historical record into a brilliant reference work which might otherwise, as she puts it, have been "no more than a tantalising curiosity".

A King's Confectioner in the Orient is in three parts: Unger's own introduction to Oriental confectionery is followed by his collection of recipes listed under the original transcriptions of their Turkish names. The third section consists of Işın's commentary on the recipes, in which she deals with misunderstandings and sheds light on missing information. Some confections, as Unger explains, were difficult to imitate since the ingredients "either cannot be found or [only] at great expense".

Işın fills in the gaps where Unger's manuscript is silent. In her commentary accompanying his rather brief entry on *lokum*, she explains why what is known in England as Turkish delight is so different from the *lokum* found in Turkey: it simply isn't the real thing, because the main ingredient of *lokum* is a starch obtained from wheat that was unknown to European cookery, in Unger's day as now.

This starch, called *nışasta*, which Unger fails to mention, has long been used in the Orient as a thickening agent for sweets and puddings. Because of its absence in the West – in England the very

IN BRIEF

The Fall of Rome
By Bryan Ward-Perkins
(OUP, £14.99)

Ward-Perkins uses archaeology and economic history to show how the fall of the Roman Empire was a catastrophe for its inhabitants whose scale we can measure fairly precisely. His target is the new generation of postmodernist historians who pooh-pooh the idea of "decline" or disaster and think Rome just faded out. Ward-Perkins shows that an industrialising world, which in some ways compares with modern times, fell back below the levels of the late Bronze Age. Wonderfully readable, often enthralling, *The Fall of Rome* is the perfect book (it isn't even heavy) for holiday reading in Side or Ephesus. Its readers will see the Roman world with new eyes.

Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire
By Gábor Ágoston (CUP, £45)

A delight for war history buffs who want to know how the Ottoman Empire made muskets and gunpowder and how it kept up with its Christian European adversaries in the art and science of war. Ágoston shows convincingly that the Ottoman military stayed abreast of Europe, but not everyone will agree with his conclusion that this shows that the Empire as a whole did not go into decline.

The Ottoman Empire,
1700–1922 (2nd Edition)
By Donald Quataert
(CUP, £15.99)

A revised edition of one of the best short introductions to Ottoman history. Quataert focuses mainly on social and economic history, relegating diplomacy and politics to the background. DB word starch is likely to conjure up images of ironing and linen – the jelly known as *pelte*, prepared from starch and fruit juice, has never become part of the repertoire of Western puddings.

But, according to Işın, two Oriental borrowings did make their way to the West with Unger: the opaque sugar paste *lohuk*, under its new name of *fondant*, and a sweet known as *peynir şekeri*, or cheese candy, the origin of Edinburgh rock. Both made their appearance in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.

In Turkey a few of the concoctions and desserts listed in Unger's book have vanished, while others have become less versatile. Of all the "Sert Scherbet", or hard sherbet cakes, listed by Unger, only one variety has survived, the red lozenges known as *lohusa şerbeti*, which can only be found in the most traditional sweet shops in Istanbul. These "cakes" are diluted with water and boiled briefly with additional sugar, cinnamon sticks and cloves to make a pleasant drink that is offered – hot or chilled, depending on the season – to guests visiting a new mother after the birth of a child. Unger lists twenty-nine flavours of this instant sherbet, from pistachio and orange-blossom to opium. None is available today.

But it is reassuring to know that most of the fruit preserves, boiled sweets (*akide şekeri*), Turkish delight (*lokum*), helvas and sweet pastries (*kadayıf* and *baklava*, for instance) have happily survived, although many are nowadays manufactured using modern techniques.

Perhaps for future editions of this book the publishers might be persuaded to include a facsimile of the original German text along with the excluded original colour plates. *A King's Confectioner in the Orient* deserves this attention. It is a treasure-trove for cookery writers and professionals, but also of enormous interest to enthusiasts – with or without a sweet tooth.

We can easily imagine that at about the same time that in England the Prince Regent was being served orange-blossom jelly by Carême, in Greece King Otto was relaxing with a tall, refreshing glass of Unger's pistachio-flavoured sherbet.

Parallel universe

BY ANDREW FINKEL

The Saint of Incipient Insanities
By Elif Shafak
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $25

The Saint of Incipient Insanities confirms Elif Shafak's membership of a new wave of Turkish literary and artistic figures who travel unencumbered across cultural boundaries. It is her fifth novel, her second to appear in English but the first to be written in English, having made its perverse way to the Turkish bestseller list in Turkish translation.

The Saint of Incipient Insanities is set in its own peculiar universe without frontiers, that of the international student flat-share in Boston where three postgraduates, from Turkey, Morocco and Spain, try (and mostly fail) to make sense of love and life as they quest for the grail of a doctoral degree. Just as the "world" in "world music" is more than the sum of it constituent nationalities, the world of international studentdom is an alternative reality, and Shafak speaks its *lingua franca* of exile and hope and of no longer being able to explain who you are. The Turkish retranslation of the title is the much simpler *Araf*, which means purgatory or "the land in between".

Shafak's first novel translated into English is *The Flea Palace*, a picaresque journey through modern Turkey told through the interconnecting stories of the residents of a down-on-its luck apartment block in Istanbul. The Saint has no such obvious conceit on which to turn and is a book crowded with incident rather than one momentous plot. In a less structurally formal way than with *The Flea Palace*, Shafak turns to each of her cast of characters, gently picks them up, dusts them off and sets them down again. She has no villains and she displays enough sympathy for her cast to leave at least some of their mysteries intact. The stories are by turns funny and bleak, like an episode of *Friends* written by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Every now and then we feel she is winding up the plot for a major set piece, but Shafak always steps back. She tells her stories quickly and with the skill to introduce farce when we are expecting the worst, and poignancy when we ache for comic relief. If the book has a protagonist, it is the Turkish political scientist Omer Sipahioglu, whose first act of surrender in America, like Shafak (Şafak) herself, is abandoning the diacritical marks in the spelling of his name (Ömer Sipahioğlu). He tries to give up his drunken philandering as he loses his heart to an American woman. We are first introduced to her as Gail, but it turns out this is just one of her many guises. Even more than Omer and his flatmates, with their odd-coloured passports, she is the professional outsider, not just in her own country but in her own body, being unable to hold onto her own name, her sexual inclination or her desire to go on living for very long. She runs through a host of self-deceptions until there is nothing left to deceive.

It is not just a ferocious competence in a language that is not her native tongue that makes it difficult to pin a national identity on Shafak. She deliberately refuses to pander to any expectation of what a female Turkish author should be about. She teases those expectations with her insider's ear for the idiom of Boston's counter-cultural streets, then becomes the outsider to rail against everyday absurdities or to turn up the volume into a comic rant at, for example, the faux-lyrical descriptions of colours on a paint chart. She is at her best, however, when displaying the old-fashioned, Trollope-like virtue of stripping away pretensions.

If I speak of Shafak as being part of a "school", it is a loose association of those whose Turkishness is not incidental to who they are but who feel no pressure to represent that Turkishness abroad or to slot it into a foreign idiom. By the same token they are not cultural missionaries importing the newest artistic creed to the folks back home. There are comparisons to be made between Shafak's odd couple in *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* and the punk lovers in director Fatih Akın's film *Gegen die Wand* (*Head On*). A journey to Istanbul plays a role in the dénouement of both works. For Gail it is the true abroad from which there can be no return; for Akın's star-crossed Cahit and Sibel it is the last chance to come home. Akın's story is sadder, his characters desperate and violent, miserable when they learn to be articulate. Shafak's characters are wise, pampered and epigrammatic. Yet hers is the more disturbing tale.

Another common denominator of this new Turkish wave is that it is not obsessed with exile and return. It is the difference between *Gastarbeitung* and transhumance. Shafak's voice is not that of a previous generation in search of its own identity but of one trying to cope with the realisation that it may never find it and learning to embrace the road. ◆

THE MAN WHO MADE ALBANIA

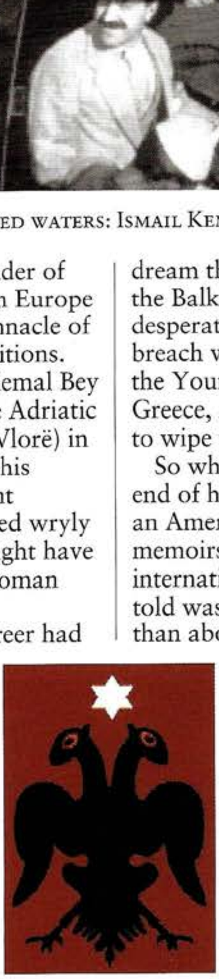
CONTINUING HIS SERIES ON THE VILLAINS AND HEROES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN ITS FINAL YEARS, DAVID BARCHARD LOOKS BACK OVER THE ROLLER-COASTER CAREER OF ISMAIL KEMAL (1844–1919)

SAILING INTO TROUBLED WATERS: ISMAIL KEMAL (WITH WHITE BEARD) IN 1912, THE YEAR HE FOUNDED ALBANIA

COURTESY OF ROBERT ELSIE

To become the founder of a nation in modern Europe might seem the pinnacle of a statesman's ambitions. But when Ismail Kemal Bey stepped onto a balcony in the Adriatic town of Valona (now called Vlorë) in November 1912 to proclaim his native Albania an independent country, he must have reflected wryly on how differently history might have worked out, both for the Ottoman Empire and in his own life.

Ismail Kemal's previous career had stretched back half a century to the 1860s and was spent chasing high office in the Ottoman Empire. He was a political liberal and an Anglophile who wanted to enable the empire to survive by reconciling its different nationalities inside a multicultural constitutional system. By 1912, this was a dream that had failed. Turkey had lost the Balkans and Albania was born in desperate circumstances after a bitter breach with the Ottoman Empire and the Young Turks, as the armies of Greece, Montenegro and Serbia tried to wipe the Albanians off the map.



So when Ismail Kemal, towards the end of his long life, was prompted by an American friend into writing his memoirs in English for an international audience, the story he told was less about the rise of Albania than about how a generation of dedicated Ottoman officials raced against the incoming tide of history only to be defeated by Ottoman absolutism, Western liberal indifference and sheer bad luck.

"I cannot help feeling a certain pride at having lived at a critical period of history in close touch with men whose work, had it not been for an adverse fate, might have preserved the East – and perhaps the world – from such calamities as we have witnessed," he wrote a few years later.

Every Ottoman life had a particular beginning in one of the separate ethnic or religious groupings that made up the empire. Ismail Kemal, born at Valona (or Vlorë) in January 1844, came from a family of Muslim tribal notables in southwestern Albania who took their surname, Vlorë, from the town. He regarded them as more or less equivalent to the ancient aristocratic families of Western Europe. The Vlorës and leading Albanian families lived on the knife-edge between high office, as the empire's pashas and governors, and insurrection and revolt. Ismail's grandfather was beheaded during a revolt in the 1820s. His father and uncles grew up in detention. Even so, the Vlorës were Ottomans. "Each successive generation returned again and again to its allegiance," Ismail Kemal wrote, and the Ottoman government rewarded those who did by making them beys and pashas.

Like every other group in the empire, Ismail Kemal's family lived with an identity dilemma. Were they Ottomans or Albanians? Sometimes the Vlorës traced their ancestry back to legendary medieval pre-Ottoman ancestors. At others its members thought they were descended from janissaries who had come from Anatolia during the empire – ideas which in later life Ismail Kemal tended to dismiss, as they conflicted with his Albanian aspirations. Yet janissary descent is common enough among Muslim notable families in the Balkans and Crete.

Ismail Kemal's early years coincided with the end of the old loose feudal relationship between the Ottoman government and the beys and chieftains of outlying provinces as the centralising reforms of Mahmut II's successor gathered speed. When Ismail was four or five, the Tanzimat officials in Istanbul (he would one day become one himself) began modernisation in Valona by introducing direct taxation and military conscription. Led by his father and uncle, the population rose in revolt against these unwelcome innovations. The government sent in the army. After a short siege, his father and uncle were captured and the whole family, including the infant Kemal, was sent into exile.

The menfolk of the family went to Manastır. The women and children, including Ismail Kemal, ended up in Salonica. There he went to a primary school and learnt his first Turkish. On his return to Valona he was given the traditional education of an Albanian chief's son, which by his account consisted solely of riding, shooting and hunting with a liveried retinue.

But the family already looked intellectually to the Western world, and from his earliest years Ismail Kemal felt the gravitational pull of western European – specifically French – culture. It stayed with him throughout his life. His family gave him a few years of modern Western-style education at the Zossimea Greek gymnasium, or high school, at Yanina – its first ever Albanian Muslim pupil. He proved formidably intelligent, learning science and mathematics along with Latin and Ancient Greek, and came away with a lifelong grasp of the Classics that few Muslim Ottoman officials can have possessed, though some of them caught his interest: Midhat Pasha, in exile in Italy in 1877, read Plutarch's *Lives* on his recommendation. In his mid-teens, Ismail Kemal was taken out of school and sent to Istanbul, where he lived in the house of a relative, the former grand vizier Giritli Mustafa Naili.

And so he slipped into a career in the higher Ottoman public service, which in its early days consisted, in medieval fashion, of staying in the households of highly placed pashas who were his relatives and travelling around the Balkans with them. Then, when he was twenty-two, Midhat Pasha, governor-general of the Danube (soon to become Bulgaria), gave him his first official position.

From then until Midhat Pasha's fall in 1877, Ismail Kemal was one of the younger members of what amounted to a liberal party inside the Ottoman public administration. It seemed in the ascendant when it began life. A new generation was trying to build on the advances made by the grand vizier Âli Pasha, the dominant figure in Turkish politics in the decade and a half after the end of the Crimean War and the Tanzimat administrative and legal reforms. The reformers' aim was to turn Turkey into a multicultural constitutional monarchy.

HE HAD OFTEN TO FOIL THE SINISTER MACHINATIONS OF SOME FOREIGN CONSULS (BY HIS ACCOUNT, USUALLY THE RUSSIANS) WHILE CULTIVATING THE FRIENDSHIP OF OTHERS (USUALLY THE ENGLISH)

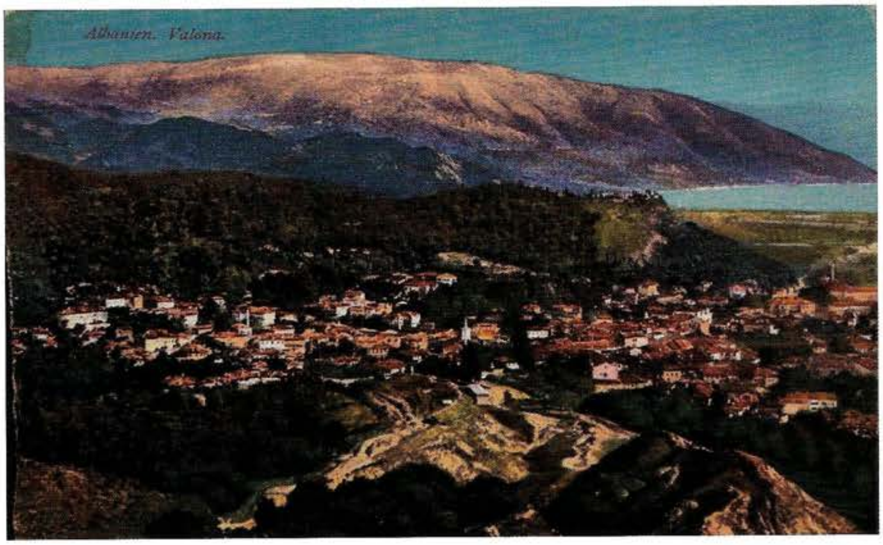
At Rusçuk (Rouse), Midhat Pasha's headquarters on the Danube, then as president of the Danube Commission and later as governor of Varna, Ismail Kemal learnt the multiple roles expected of a reforming governor. He encouraged social progress through the spread of education and infrastructure and headed off internal confrontations between the different nationalities and religions in the empire. Despite the gathering storm clouds, he was optimistic about what good administrators could achieve, writing: "The East, which seems to so many people to be utterly recalcitrant to order and good government, is in my opinion the easiest part of the world to bring into good ways if one is only just and patient."

There were, however, outside complications. Ismail Kemal had often to foil the sinister machinations of some foreign consuls (by his account, usually the Russians) while cultivating the friendship of others (usually the English). For being a liberal meant making, or trying to make, Western friends, something at which Ismail Kemal was always gifted. A particular friend was Colonel Charles "Chinese" Gordon, later famous as "Gordon of Khartoum", killed in a Sudanese uprising. As they talked during long evenings in the Danube provinces, the young governor learnt from one of the most famous names of Victorian England about the incompetence of the British commanders in the Crimean War and the brutal sacking of the Summer Palace of the Chinese emperors in Beijing. Nearly sixty years later, Ismail Kemal's sons, by then no longer Ottomans but local leaders in the turbulent Albania of the 1920s, would proudly display to English travellers the letters Gordon had written to their father.

Like any ambitious young politician or senior civil servant, Ismail Kemal began to move in international high society. He met the Prince and Princess of Wales on their visit to Istanbul in 1869; a couple of years before that he had been in the reception party that greeted Abdülaziz as he crossed from Hungary back into the Ottoman Balkans. By 1875, still only thirty-one, when he left for northern Europe for the first time on what would seem (though he does not say so) to have been an attempt by the liberal party in the Ottoman administration to court English backing, he met Lord Derby, the foreign secretary, and Sir Stafford Northcote, the chancellor of the exchequer, and stayed in the Borders castle of the Dalyell family (Sir Robert Dalyell, the local squire, being a close friend from the consular service). Ismail Kemal's aims were partly educational. He attended parish council meetings in the village in order to learn about local democracy, just as

Albanien. Valona.

COURTESY OF ROBERT ELSIE

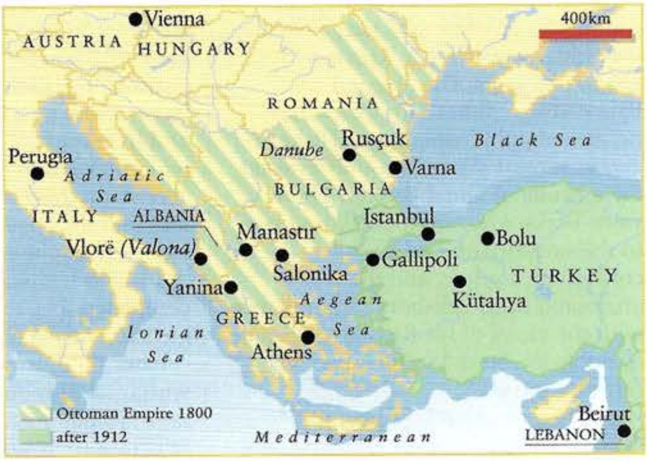

Albanien. Valona.

ABOVE LEFT: ISMAIL KEMAL WAS 'A KINDLY AND A VERSATILE MAN, WHOSE LIFE HAD BEEN A LONG AND PRECARIOUS SEE-SAW'. HIS NETWORK OF FRIENDS STRETCHED FROM BEIRUT TO THE SCOTTISH BORDERS. ABOVE: TWO VIEWS OF VALONA, NOW CALLED VLORË, THE TOWN WHERE HE WAS BORN AND WHERE HE LATER DECLARED ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE

in London and Paris he studied economics and public finance.

By then the affairs of the Ottoman Empire were hurtling towards disaster. Abdülaziz's attempt to sideline Midhat Pasha and the reformers led to financial disaster and the repudiation of Ottoman debts, while the Ottoman hold on the Balkans became ever more tenuous. In the course of his work in the Balkans, Ismail Kemal had been asked to help draw up emergency plans for the empire's response to a possible uprising in Bulgaria and Romania. Knowing the heir to the throne, Prince Murat, was a liberal and a constitutionalist, Midhat Pasha and his associates decided the erratic and spendthrift Abdülaziz should be deposed. Ismail Kemal says he was aware of the plans but advised strongly against deposition. He also, somewhat

RIGHT: ISMAIL KEMAL'S CAREER HAD FOLLOWED A TYPICAL OTTOMAN PATTERN – FOREVER ON THE MOVE. AFTER GROWING UP IN VALONA, MANASTIR, SALONICA AND YANINA (ALL STILL PART OF THE EMPIRE), HE FOUND HIMSELF MOVING BETWEEN ISTANBUL, RUSÇUK, VARNA, GALLIPOLI, BOLU, KÜTAHYA AND BEIRUT


Vienna
AUSTRIA HUNGARY
400km
ROMANIA
Rusçuk
Black Sea
Danube
Perugia
Varna
Adriatic Sea
BULGARIA
ITALY
ALBANIA
Istanbul
Manastır
Bolu
Vlorë (Valona)
Gallipoli
Salonika
TURKEY
Yanina
Aegean Sea
Kütahya
GREECE
Ionian Sea
Athens
Ottoman Empire 1800
after 1912
Mediterranean
Beirut
LEBANON

SUSANNA HICKLING

to his colleagues' annoyance, seems to have made his disapproval known to Lord Derby in London.

On May 30, while Ismail Kemal was in his home town on the Adriatic, Abdülaziz was replaced as sultan by his nephew, the liberal pro-Western Murat V. This was intended to be the opening of an Ottoman liberal epoch in which, for example, the grand vizier would have become the prime minister of a constitutional state. But the gruesome events which quickly unfolded, including the suicide of Abdülaziz, the assassination of the grand vizier and foreign minister, and (above all) the collapse of the new sultan into insanity, sank quickly into tragedy reminiscent of a Shakespeare history play.

The Ottoman liberals' first frustration was that Britain, whose political system they were trying to adopt and whose protection they needed, spurned them. The first signs that England would not support the liberal movement in Turkey came in late 1876–77, on the eve of the Russian invasion, during Lord Salisbury's stay in Istanbul. Lord Salisbury detested the new sultan, Abdülhamit, successor of Murat V, on sight but saw little merit in Midhat Pasha either. The Ottoman reformers realised the personal chemistry was not working but persistently underestimated how isolated they were.

"I must say that Lord Salisbury, during this stay of his in Constantinople, had always borne himself towards the Ottoman dignitaries and especially towards Midhat Pasha, with a certain hauteur and coldness which did not impress us very favourably," wrote Ismail Kemal.

He did, however, detect that the root of the problem was that Salisbury was softer towards the Russians than his predecessors, Disraeli and Palmerston. "What astonished and perplexed public opinion in Turkey and in several Western countries was the attitude of Great Britain. There were Turks who entertained doubts as to the sincerity of English policy concerning Turkey, and these attributed Lord Salisbury's compliance with the views of his Russian colleague to duplicity. So did some others in other countries."

The real shipwreck of liberal Ottoman hopes quickly followed, as it emerged that the new sultan, Abdülhamit II, was a determined opponent of Midhat Pasha and liberal constitutionalism who believed the problems of the Ottoman empire were due to the legal and administrative reforms launched in 1839 by his father at the bidding of Mustafa Reşit Pasha and the British. Unlike his predecessors, he was not a cipher. He possessed the ability and ruthlessness required to impose repressive personal rule on Turkey for three decades. Midhat Pasha was eventually bundled off to Tahif in Arabia and murdered (a detail Ismail Kemal evidently could not face, for in his memoirs he says only that Midhat Pasha died of anthrax).

The liberal group disappeared. Ismail Kemal began a lonely and precarious new career under Abdülhamit, starting with seven years' exile in Kütahya, followed by a series of middle-rank governorships in places which kept him well out of the way.

The first post, for six years, was in Bolu, coping with brigands and trying to prod the local people into such innovations as using river transport for rafting logs. Ismail Kemal loved the landscapes and natural life of western Anatolia, but found its population less inclined to welcome change than the peoples of the Balkans. "The population of the East are really honest, docile and good-natured, but their fault is that they are led by more or less stupid prejudices and by a spirit of hopeless routine. I had much trouble in getting them to accept anything new. In spite of the fact that they had the greatest objection to the construction of new roads and highways, when these were completed they experienced the greatest satisfaction in them."

HIS OFFICES UNDER ABDÜLHAMIT... NEVER BROUGHT HIM THE COVETED TITLE OF PASHA, WHICH HE HAD TURNED DOWN AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS CAREER BECAUSE HE FELT TOO YOUNG FOR IT

After Bolu, Ismail Kemal wanted to withdraw into business life, including railroad-building, but Abdülhamit was reluctant to let go of him. Further postings came, unsought and imposed by the sultan: Gallipoli, and then in 1891–92, the governor-generalship of Beirut. His offices under Abdülhamit were marginal compared to those he might otherwise have expected. They never brought him the coveted title of pasha, which he had turned down at the beginning of his career when he went to Varna because he felt too young for it. Nonetheless, by the time he entered his fifties, Ismail Kemal was one of the few significant independent figures on the depopulated Hamidian political scene, though the aura of Midhat Pasha and liberalism still clung to him. The sultan alternately wooed and threatened him, but also consulted him. In lengthy memoranda, which perhaps did not help his own cause, Ismail Kemal urged Abdülhamit to embrace the cause of reform in order to guarantee the survival of the empire, and to pursue closer ties with England, despite Lord Salisbury.

By the second half of the 1890s Ismail Kemal's links with the sultan had stretched to breaking point. He was in close contact with the British embassy. Sir Philip Curry, an ambassador Abdülhamit particularly hated, was an old friend from the 1870s. Sometimes purses of gold were offered to Ismail Kemal to try and win him over to the sultan, but increasingly there were also dark threats and the possibility of assassination. Yet, his editor in Paris many years later recalled, "...in spite of the ungrateful way the latter Sultan had treated him, it was plain that [Ismail Kemal Bey] kept an affectionate corner for him in his heart."

Ismail Kemal's description of how the Hamidian system looked at its centre is particularly revealing. "The Sultan's Palace, which was justly considered to be the heart of the evil genius of the Empire, where Abd-ul-Hamid concentrated all his autocratic power, and whence, with his extraordinary energy, he directed all the administrative wheels of this immense country, had the advantage also of being the rendezvous of all the best minds of the Empire. Many a functionary and official exchanged views on the country's politics with extraordinary frankness, giving free vent to criticisms such as one imagines are heard only in Liberal countries. Besides those who surrounded the great Master with the incense of ridiculous flattery, there were others who did not hesitate to criticise with severity not only the acts of the Ministers, but even those of the Monarch himself.

"The Armenian massacres and other troubles in the Empire combined to cause the greatest distress, and occupied the minds of many of the highest persons attached to the service of the Sultan; and I must say, Abd-ul-Hamid permitted observations and criticisms to be made to him, even in a disagreeable manner, that few Sovereigns or Ministers of Liberal countries would have allowed."

During these years, Ismail Kemal, like several other senior Ottoman officials, was quietly in touch with a growing tide of Albanian sentiment. He turned to journalism, launching a paper, *Mecra-i Efkâr*, which was printed in Bulgaria and could circulate only clandestinely in Turkey. Abdülhamit became increasingly agitated, and on May 1, 1900, Ismail Kemal, in theory about to go to Libya as governor of Tripoli, fled Turkey under British naval escort after seeking asylum on the British embassy stationnaire yacht in the Bosphorus.

He visited Athens, where he was received by the king and flirted fairly openly with Turkey's enemies such as the *Times* journalist JD Bourchier and the archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans – and, it would seem, engaged in periodic secret contacts with the Greeks over Albania until 1912. As a potential leader of an alternative regime in Turkey, he got some interest (though rather less than he implies in his memoirs) from the British government, and spent the next eight years publishing newspapers from Brussels. He was also sentenced to death in absentia (though his son was a member of the palace guard) and trailed by shadowy figures.

His dealings with the Young Turk movement in exile quickly exposed an insoluble difference: he wanted decentralisation and strong local government; they wanted the opposite. He was an Albanian patriot (and by now suspected of trying to establish a principality in Albania). The Young Turks were Turkish nationalists.

These antagonisms began in exile and continued after November 1908 when the Young Turk revolution enabled Ismail Kemal to return to Turkey. Elections had made him the leader of a band of twenty-five Albanian deputies in the first Ottoman Assembly since 1877, but he was also the most senior of the Young Turks' opponents. On Tuesday April 13, 1909, Ismail Kemal Bey's only moment as a front-rank figure in Turkish politics arrived. There was a counter-coup in army units in Istanbul against the Committee of Union and Progress and the Young Turks. The Young Turks fled amid scenes of violence and Ismail Kemal was briefly elected president of the assembly.

It was during the fleeting hours that he possessed this office that, after a gap of nine years and for the last time in his life, Ismail Kemal met Abdülhamit, "in the most affable manner". They spoke as old friends, regretting the things that had come between them in the past. The 1909 uprising was suppressed by the Salonica army in a few days and is remembered in Turkish history as a dark moment for the forces of modernity. Ismail Kemal's Turkish career ended with him on the wrong side.

Their detail and accuracy make his memoirs an amazing feat of memory. They are the only real insider account of the late Ottoman Empire written in English

Brief exile followed, and eventually more clashes with the Committee of Union and Progress, and then Ismail Kemal and his twenty-five Albanian deputies departed for Vlorë and an irrevocable break with the empire. He ruled Albania briefly but the great powers were not disposed to encourage Albanian unity as they had encouraged Greek nationalism. In 1913 they recognised only a small Albania (thus creating Balkan problems which have lasted to this day) and tried unsuccessfully to impose a German prince as its ruler rather than back Ismail Kemal against his rivals as the new country's prince or president.

Aubrey Herbert, one of the few British observers at this date who was friendly to Turks and Albanians, recorded that during his last years "Ismail Kemal Bey, [was] a kindly and a versatile man, whose life had been a long and precarious see-saw. His weakness lay in his circumstances and in his affection for his children. If he was tortuous, it was because it was difficult to be straight in his position. Impecuniosity was his taskmaster." "[He looked like] a wise and benevolent tortoise with… a real liberalism which never faded… He was canny and he was able."

Ismail Kemal blamed the First World War partly on British mistakes, believing that "it was due to Britain's carelessness and indifference that Turkey had come into the war on the side of the Central Powers, England having always until the last few years been looked upon as the protector and unchangeable friend of Turkey."

In 1916 he went to Paris and lived most of his last years in a small hotel. Evidently he was a great raconteur. Perhaps because of this, an American journalist friend, William Morton Fullerton, also a friend of Henry James and Edith Wharton, persuaded him to produce his memoirs and found a collaborator who worked with him, under great difficulties, for eighteen months, before the story broke off with the end of Ismail Kemal's Turkish career. "He had no papers, no notes, and often regretted all his papers left behind at Constantinople," recalled his collaborator, the *Daily Mail* journalist Sommerville Story. Yet their detail and accuracy make his memoirs an amazing feat of memory. They are the only real insider account of the late Ottoman Empire written in English. Ismail Kemal's imagination still seems to have been largely Turkish and Ottoman, for he praised Story, saying "he deserved to be a Turk for his powers of comprehension".

Ismail Kemal's own story broke off soon afterwards, as abruptly as his autobiography. On a round of routine contacts across Europe, he was lured to Italy with an invitation from its government, and then placed under surveillance in Perugia, where he died, bitterly complaining of his treatment. ◆

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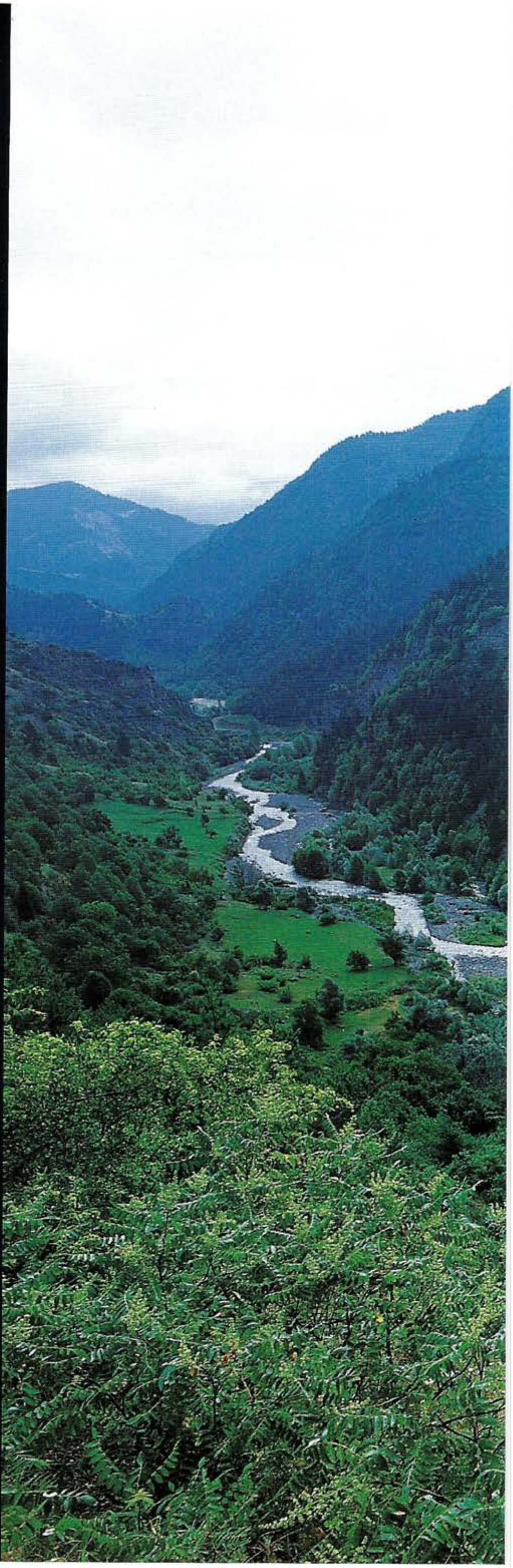
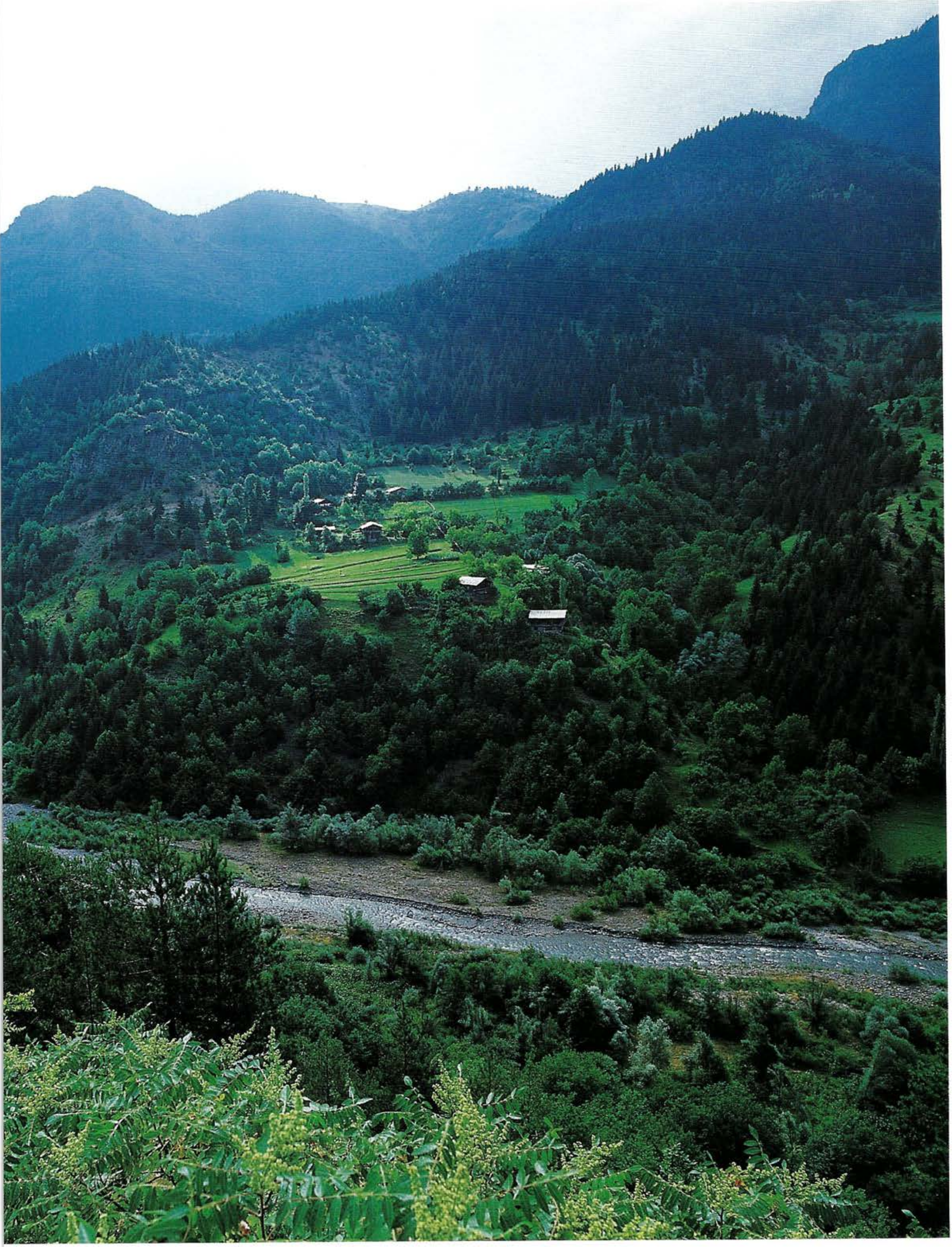
COUNTRY HOUSES OF THE BLACK SEA

LAND OF A THOUSAND MANSIONS

Emerald-green tea gardens, thunderous rivers, magical rainforests – Turkey's Eastern Black Sea Mountains are a remote paradise when they emerge from the mists and the rain. In a special report featuring the photographs of Ali Konyalı, we celebrate the beauty of the mansions and farmhouses that survey the valleys



EDEN OF THE EAST: A HANDFUL OF BARNS AND HOUSES SET IN CORNFIELDS IN THE VALLEY OF CIRIT DÜZÜ, NEAR TURKEY'S BORDER WITH GEORGIA. A RIVER SNAKES ITS WAY INTO THE DISTANCE



COUNTRY HOUSES OF THE BLACK SEA

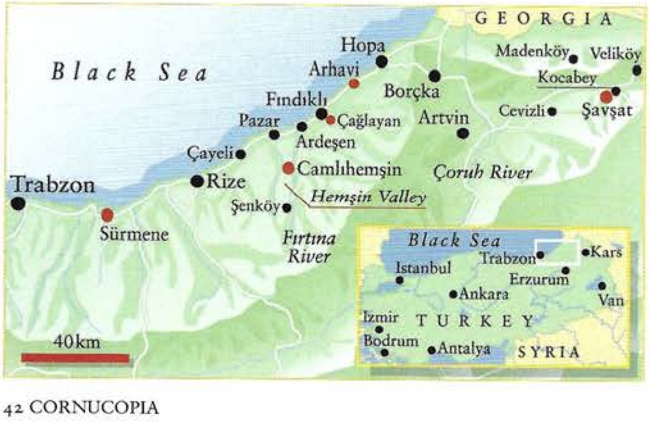
In 2004, the photographer Ali Konyalı set out with his publisher, Ameli Edgü, to capture the magnificent houses of Turkey's Eastern Black Sea Mountains. The resulting book, published this summer, is a unique record of the region. CORNUCOPIA presents 38 pages of the book's visual highlights, with accompanying text based on the detailed knowledge of Mustafa Reşat Sümerkan, an authority on the region's vernacular architecture. But how did these houses come to be built? The anthropologist Michael Meeker investigates on page 74

Most visitors who venture east of Trabzon, the great port city of Turkey's northeast, head up to the high mountains, to walk across hills of breathtaking beauty covered in wild rhododendron, campanulas and primulas.

But the valleys have their treasures too, which visitors rush past when they head for the heights. Tea gardens, orchards and forests of chestnut and alder envelop these remote valleys in a thick mantle of green. And rising from this lushness are magnificent mansions and farmhouses, many at least a century old. They are handsome buildings, lovingly constructed of timber and stone, and perfectly fitted to the landscape and climate.

In their search for the riches of the eastern Black Sea region, the editorial team – photographer, publisher and architectural historian – set off from Trabzon towards the east. They wandered through the tea gardens of Çağlayan, a broad valley with stately, almost Elizabethan houses. They visited Çamlıhemşin, where merchants who had made fortunes abroad built massive mansions just a few yards from each other, and Hemşin, with its solid, stone-built farmhouses. In the more easily reached valleys above the small port of Arhavi, they found houses whose façades are draped with scented grapevines in the gentle climate. At Şavşat, well inland, close to the border with Georgia, they entered a landscape of Alpine chalets. And in the rainforest surrounding the tea country of Rize they visited wooden mosques that look for all the world like houses.

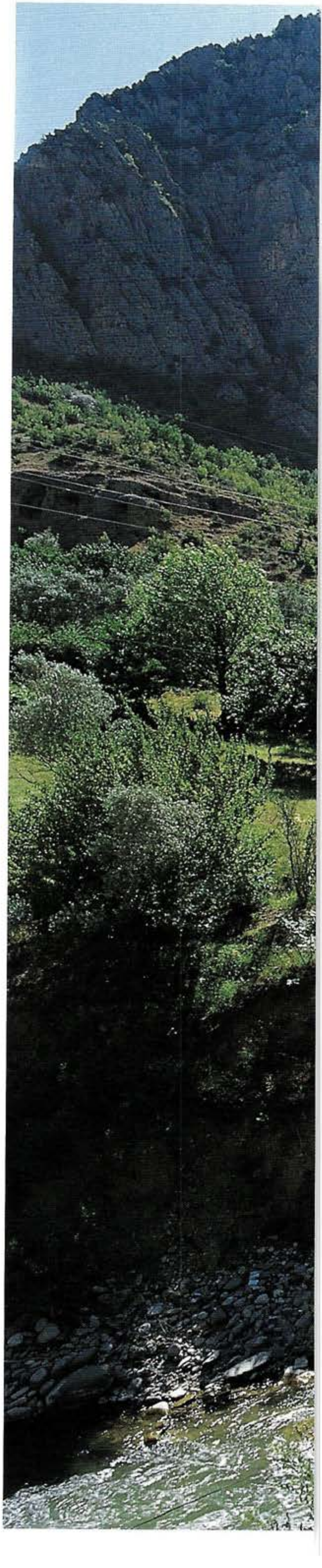
But these buildings are vanishing fast. When Ali Konyalı captured them on camera, he was doing so in the nick of time. City life is luring away the descendants of the men and women who built them. Inheritance laws divide and divide again until properties have dozens of owners and no single individual can take on the responsibility of maintaining them. And there is little or no funding for restoration. Many houses are simply abandoned, left to the mercy of the elements. Unless laws are passed and funds are found, this unsung heritage could soon be lost for ever.

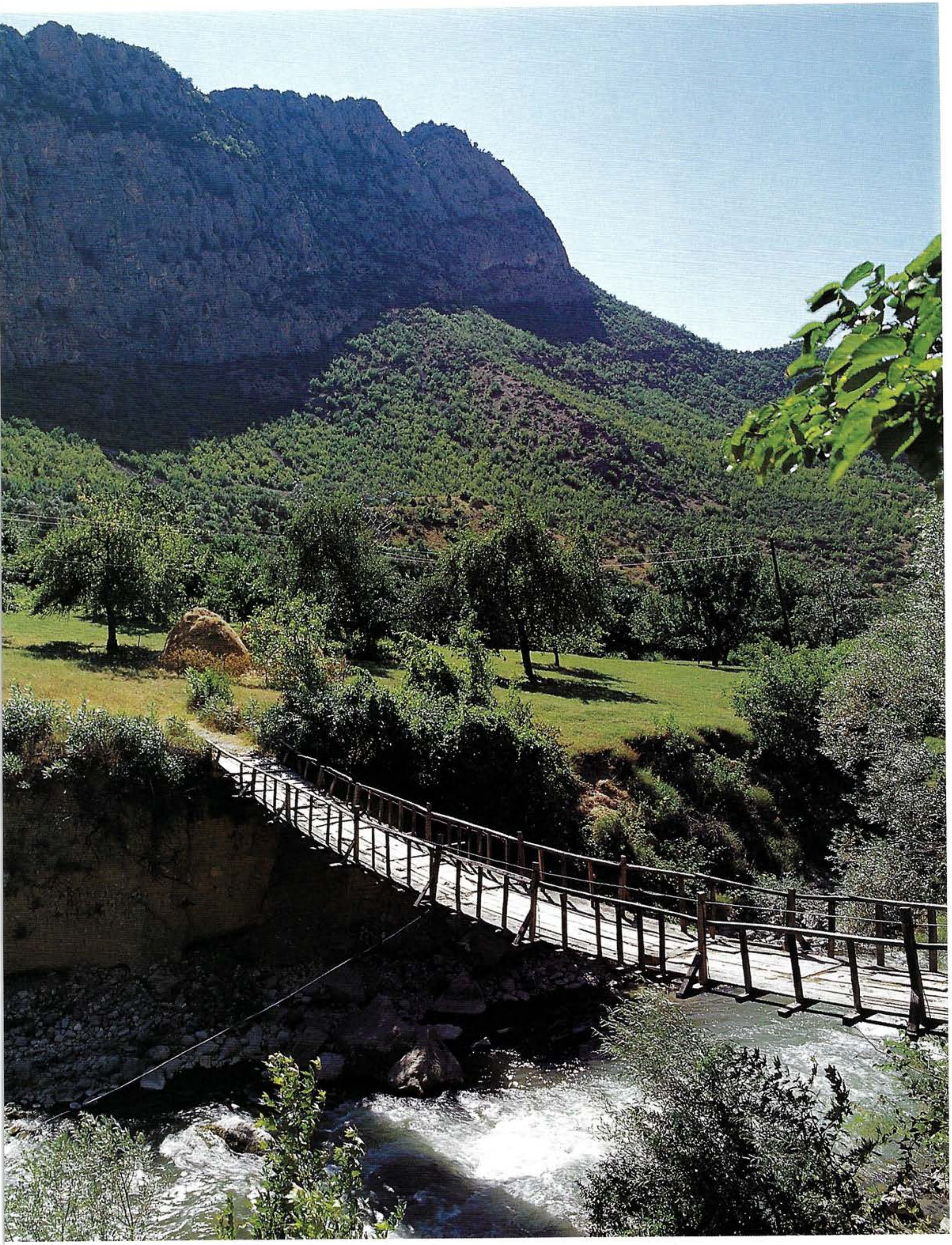


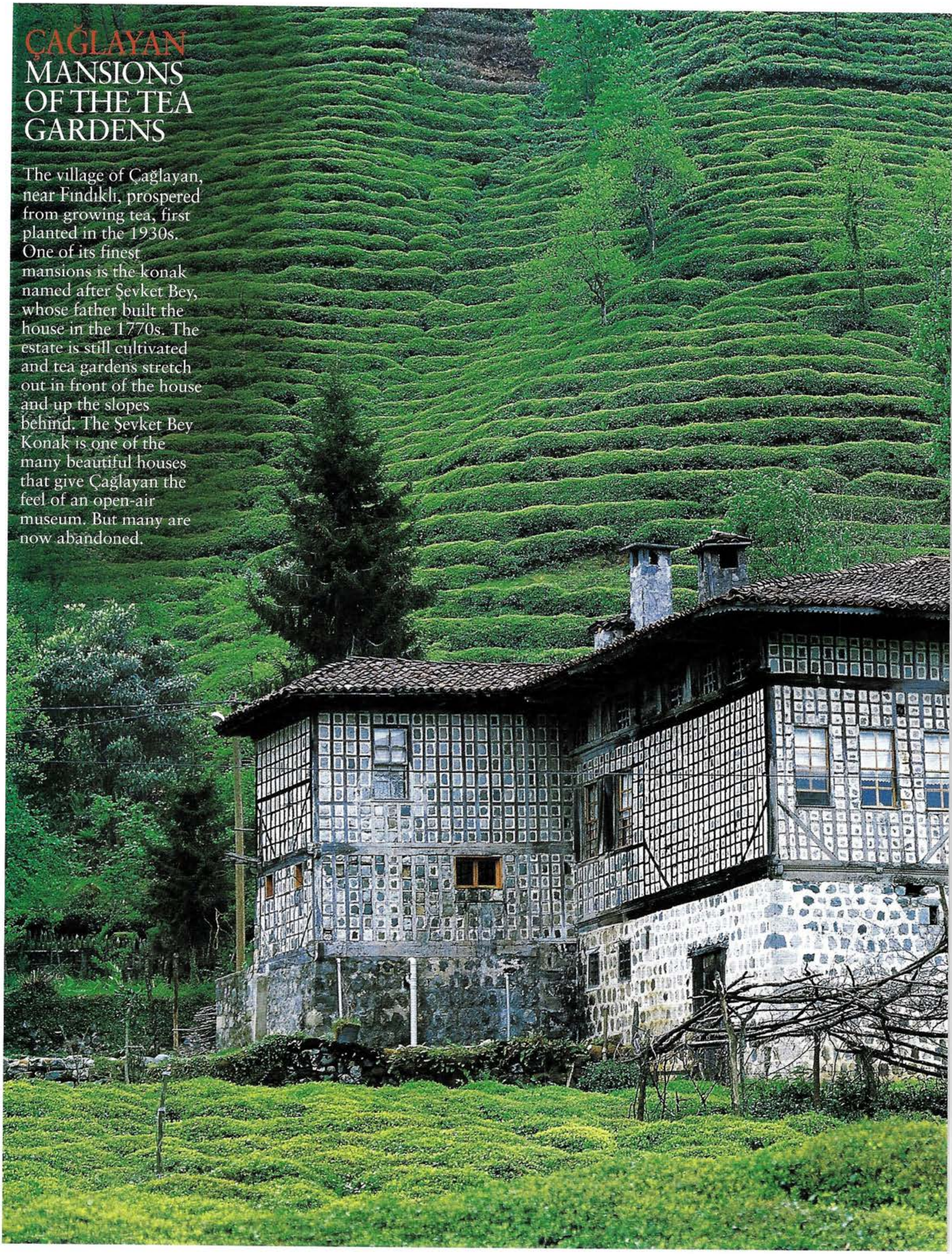
SUSANNA HICKLING

For details of the book containing these and many other photographs by Ali Konyalı see page 77

RIGHT: AN ORCHARD OF APRICOT TREES IS REACHED BY A NARROW FOOTBRIDGE OVER A TRIBUTARY OF THE ÇORUH RIVER

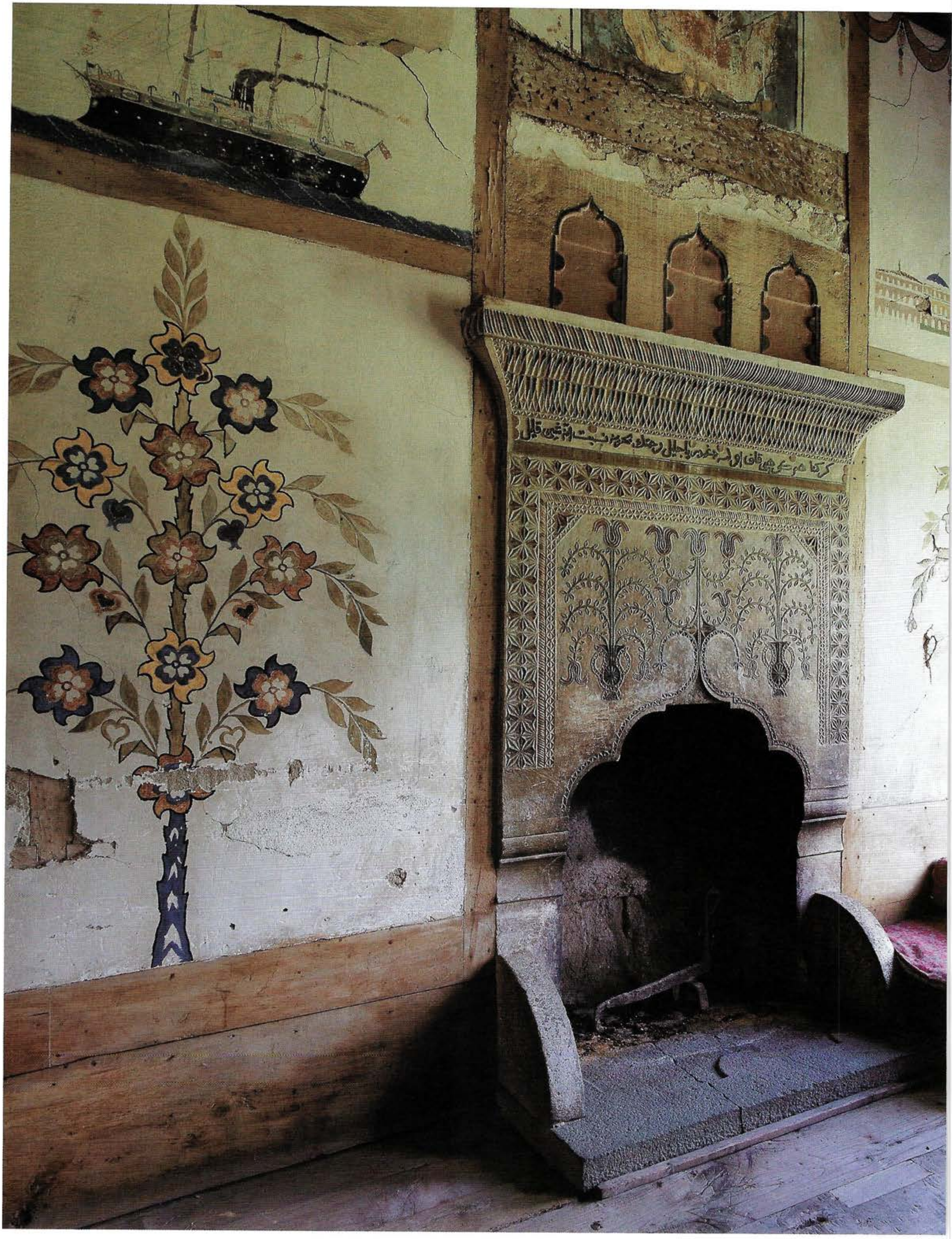


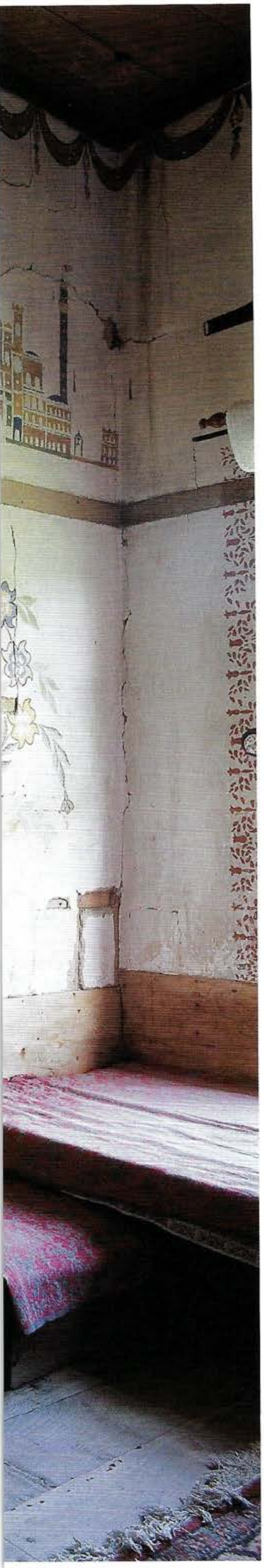




ÇAĞLAYAN MANSIONS OF THE TEA GARDENS

The village of Çağlayan, near Fındıklı, prospered from growing tea, first planted in the 1930s. One of its finest mansions is the konak named after Şevket Bey, whose father built the house in the 1770s. The estate is still cultivated and tea gardens stretch out in front of the house and up the slopes behind. The Şevket Bey Konak is one of the many beautiful houses that give Çağlayan the feel of an open-air museum. But many are now abandoned.



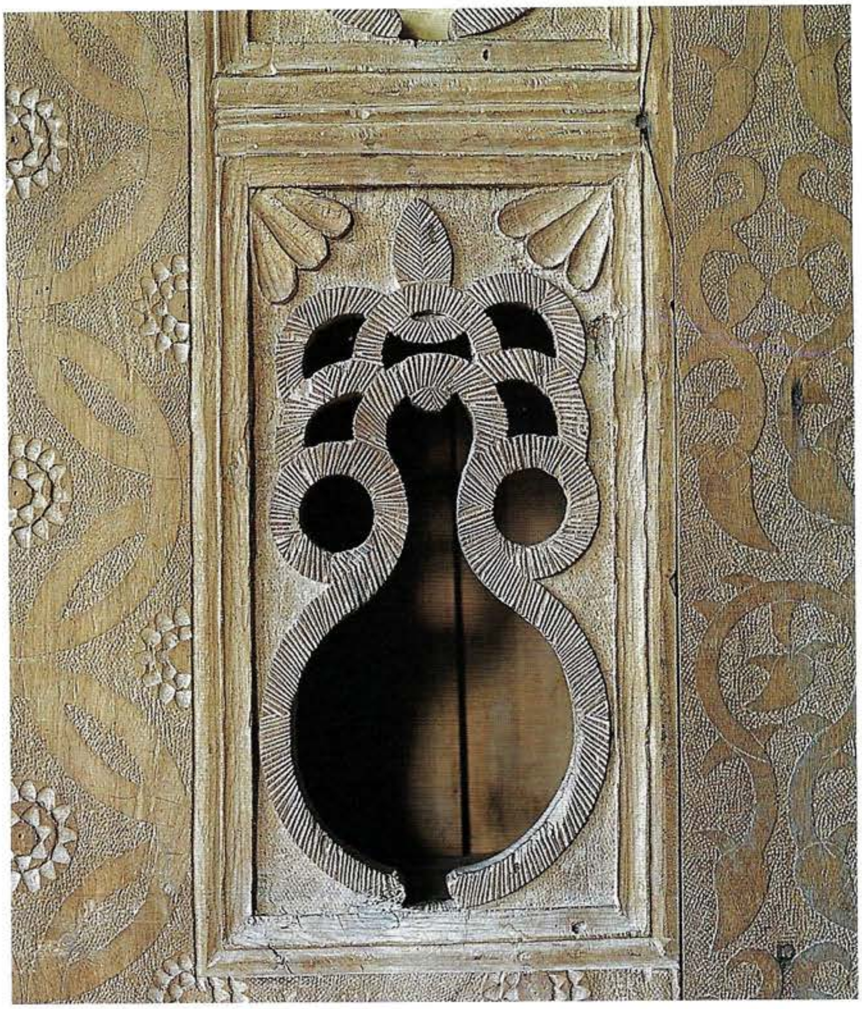


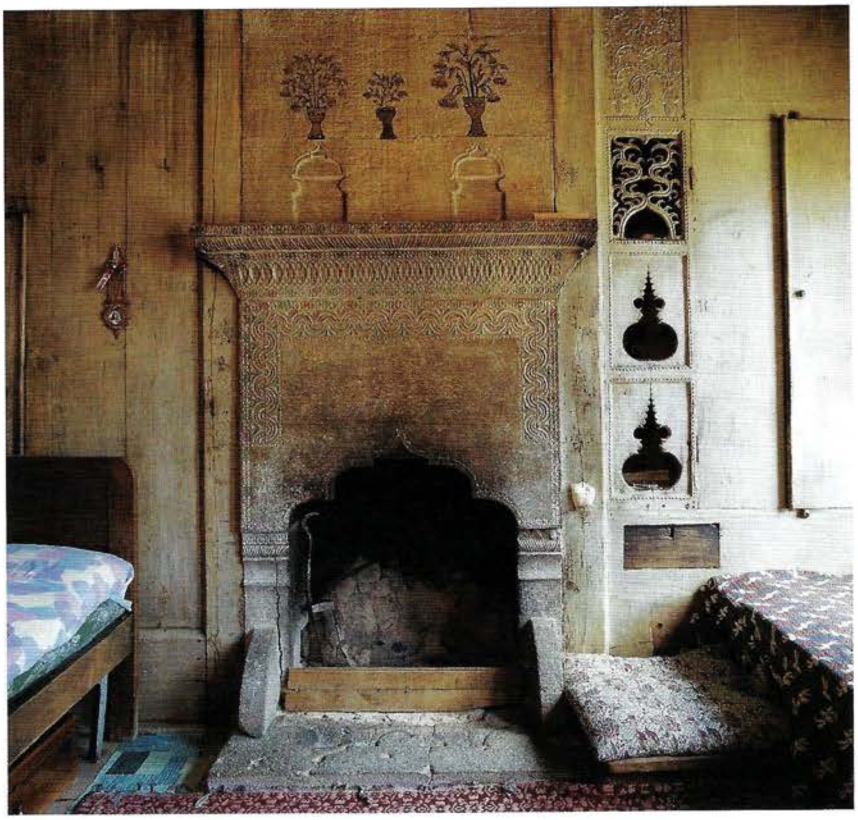
Çağlayan

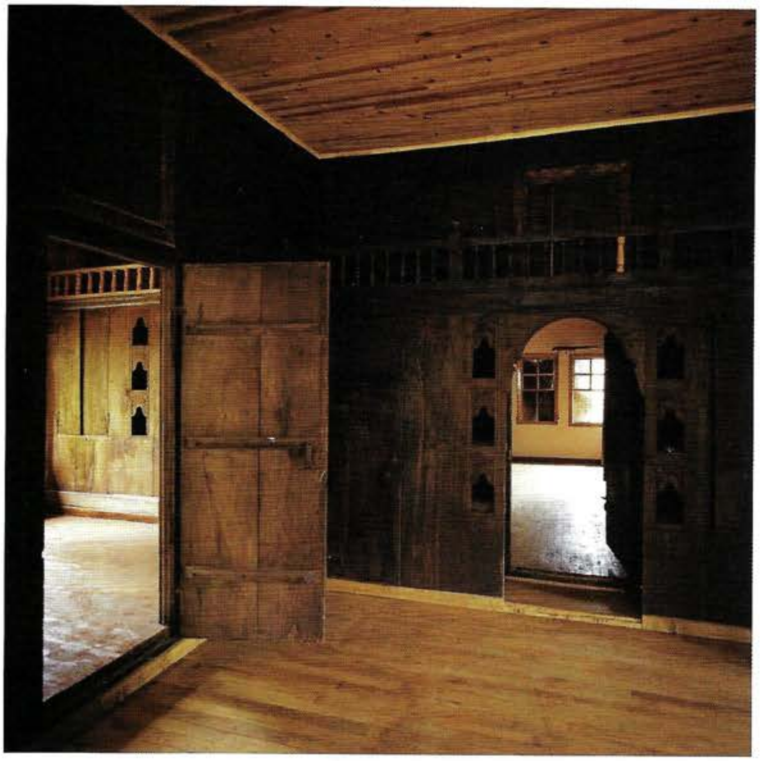
Left: the tree of life is a dominant theme in the main room of the Şevket Bey Konak. It appears both in murals and in the attractive mantelpiece, recalling ancient animistic beliefs that still hold sway in the remote villages of the Caucasus. From the steamship on the wall, however, we may assume that Şevket Bey was a man of the world, an image reinforced by pictures elsewhere in the room of regiments of soldiers, weaponry and various cities, in particular Istanbul. It is now extremely rare to find such decorations. This room would have been reserved for respected visitors.

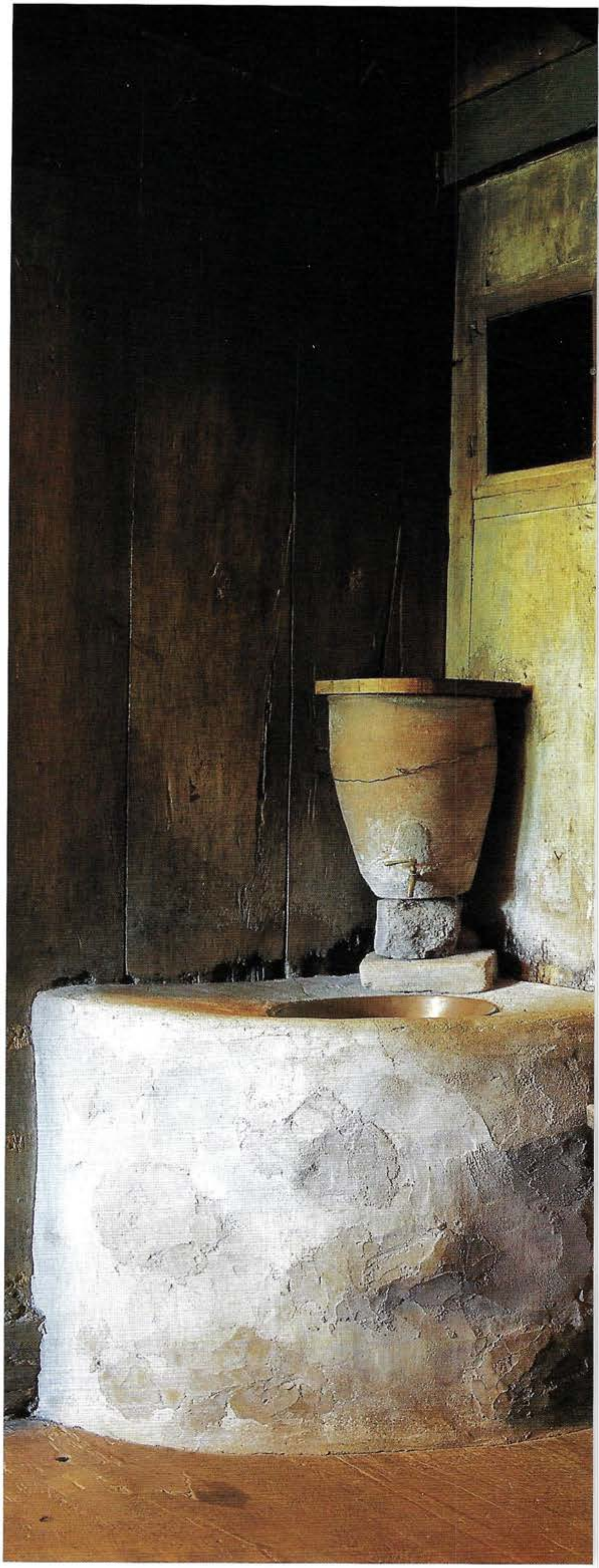
Top right: built-in niches (*takçagöz*) with elaborate frames are a feature of all Çağlayan's old houses. This one is part of a wall cupboard in the Hurşit Bey Konak, which is just 150 yards to the north of the house of Şevket Bey. Echoing the sinuous curves of the pierced frame, the surrounding wall is decorated with chiselled floral patterns.

Bottom right: in one of the bedrooms of the Şevket Bey Konak, light accentuates the outline of niches next to a fine fireplace with an almost Mughal arch. Fireplaces here are tall and profusely carved with surface motifs, but because they are shallow, stone brackets are needed to provide protection from burning embers.







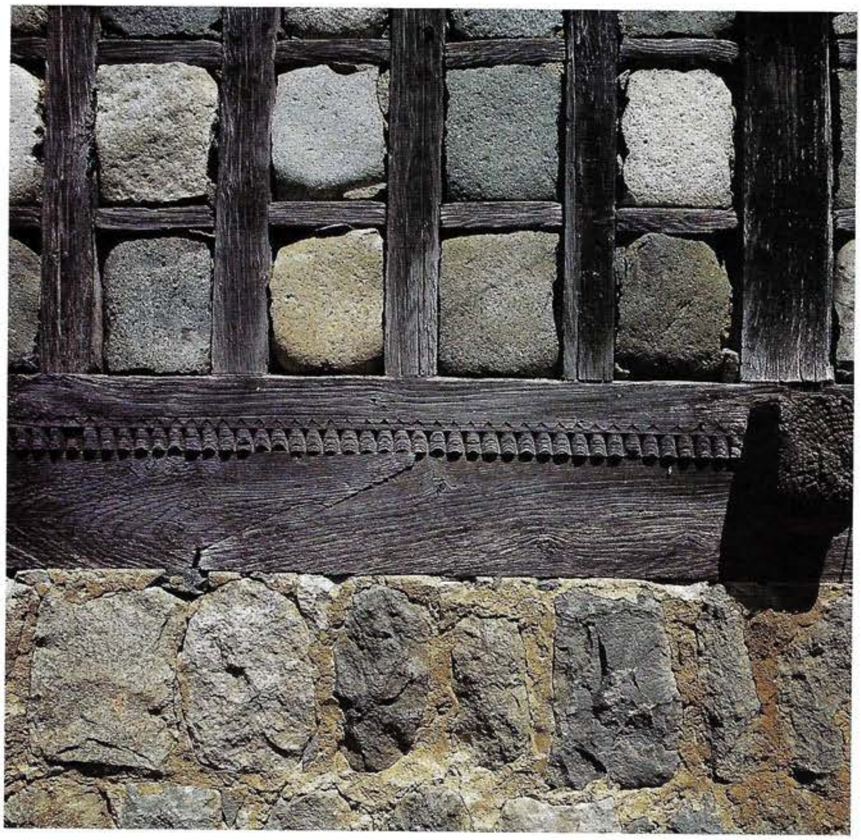


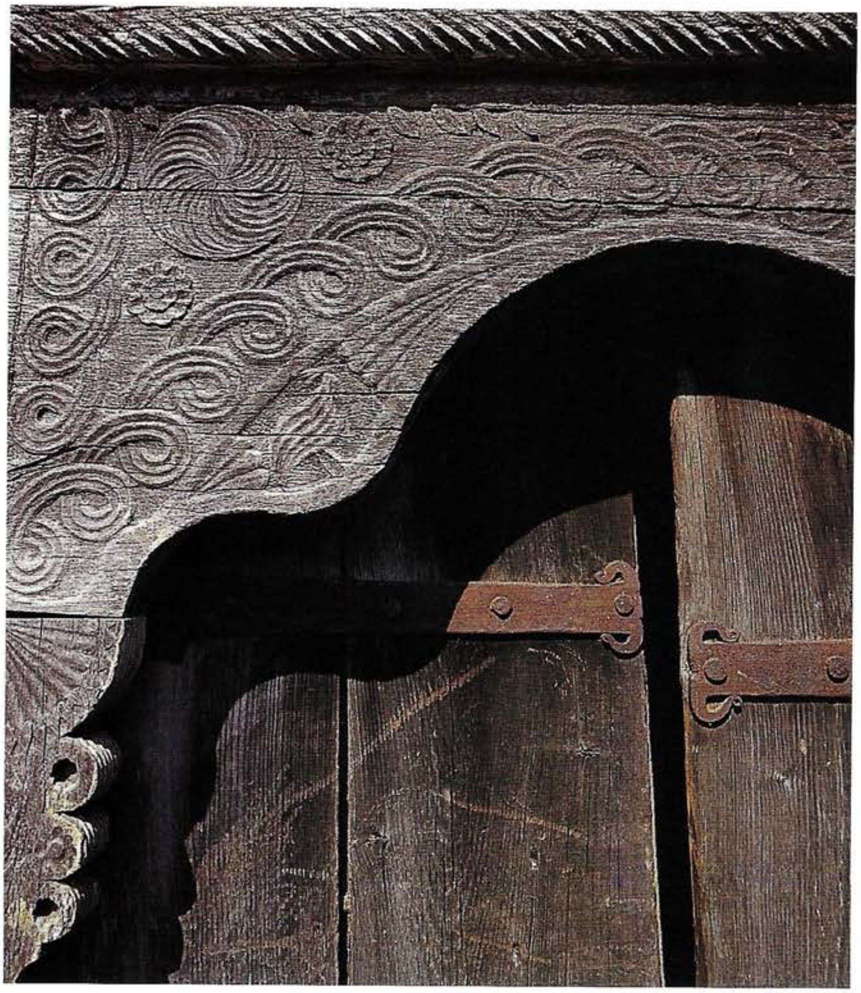
Çağlayan

Carpentry has always been held in high esteem in this land of giant forests. Wood, preferably chestnut, is used not only for doors, but for internal walls and ceilings, which are usually left exposed.

Right: in the guest quarters of the Şevket Bey Konak, the door is carved with stylised patterns of exotic plants and fruit. In a corner of the room is a massive stone sink with a copper basin where visitors can wash their hands under the tap of an earthenware vessel.

Above: many of Çağlayan's fine houses are left empty as owners continue to abandon the village, but this house, belonging to the Hacaloğlu family, has recently been restored. With its glowing woodwork, it is a wonderful example of the massive timber buildings of the region, and of the skills of joiners, carpenters and carvers. Each room has spacious built-in cupboards. The niches were for immediate essentials or decorative objects. They also served as steps up to the gallery storage area above.



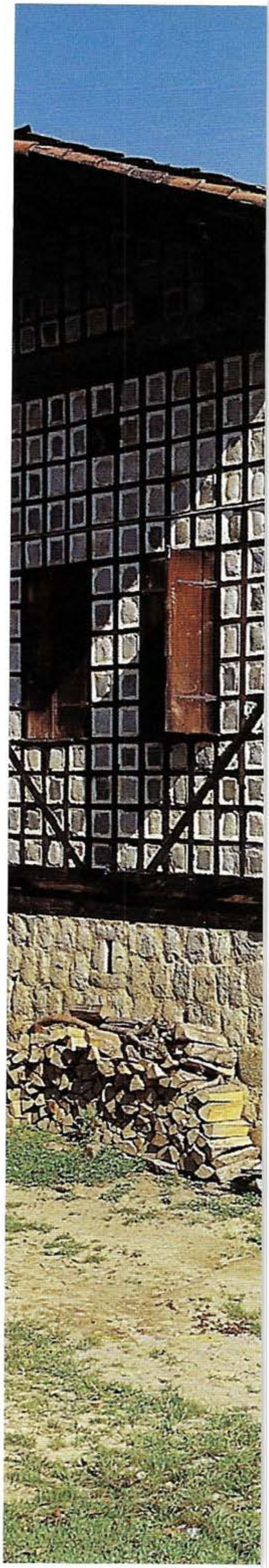


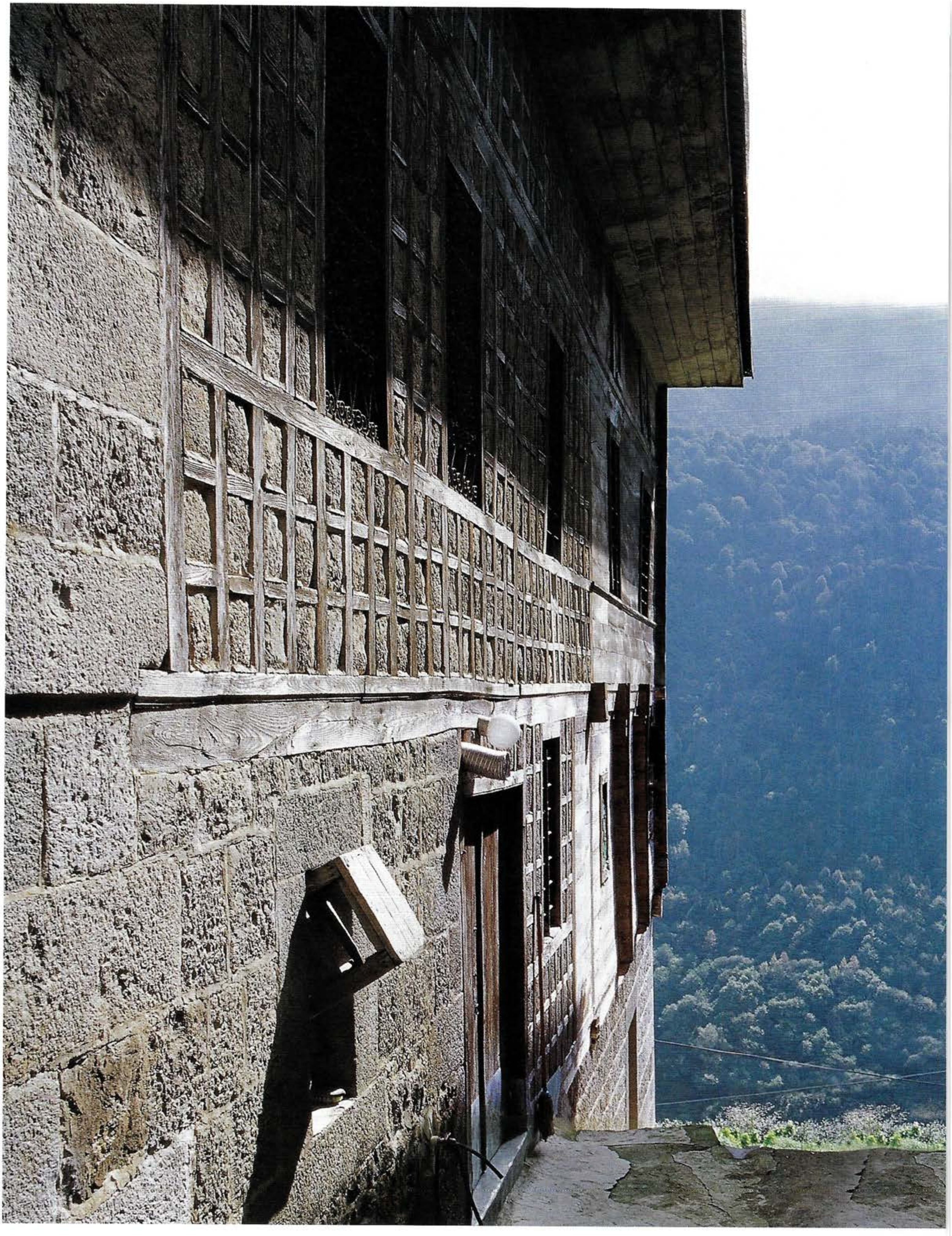
Çağlayan

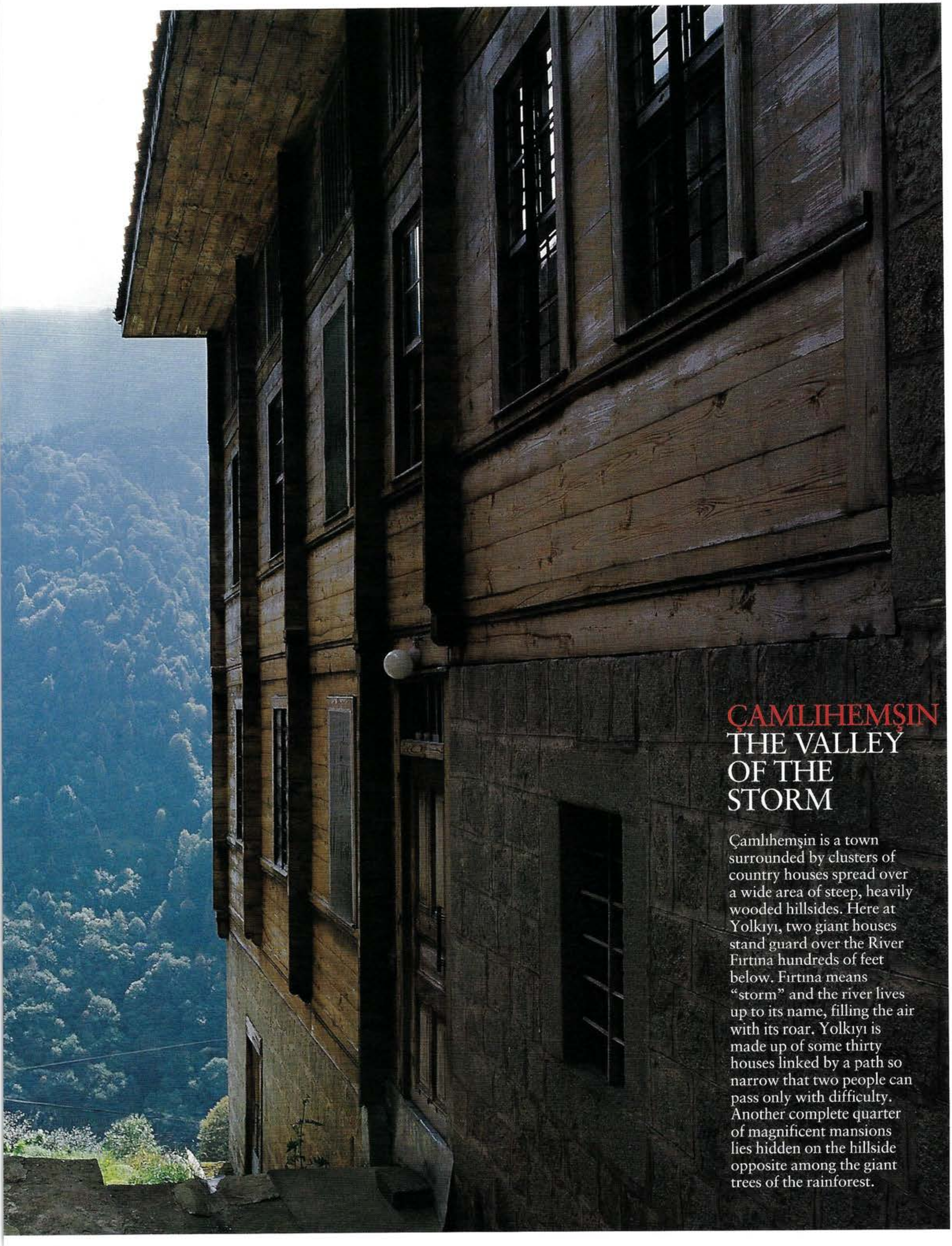
Right: a magnificent quadrant of stone steps leads up to the main, south-facing entrance of the Hurşit Bey Konak. This is the way into the living quarters upstairs; below is a stable for cattle. The front doors of houses in Çağlayan are like compasses, invariably facing away from the prevailing wind. The door leads into a small hallway (*küçük avlu*), where, off to the right, in a separate wing, are the kitchen, bathroom and lavatories. They were kept apart from the main building, which smelt far sweeter.

Top left: a detail of the stonework in the Hurşit Bey Konak. A technique known as *göz dolma* ("eye-filling") was used, in which a grid of timbers is infilled with cut stone. A massive wooden plank is placed on the lower stone wall. On top of this, strong vertical planks are erected every fifteen centimetres to help bear the weight of the roof. Horizontal blocks of wood are added, without nails, to create square niches, which are then filled with polished stones gathered from the riverbed and cut to size. Their natural colours and sheen create a beautiful effect.

Bottom left: the arch above the front door of the Hurşit Bey Konak is seemingly shaped to accommodate a visitor's head and shoulders. It is carved with geometric motifs, a sphere of heaven (*çarkıfelek*) and two small rosettes. A horn motif adorns the iron brackets that secure the door.



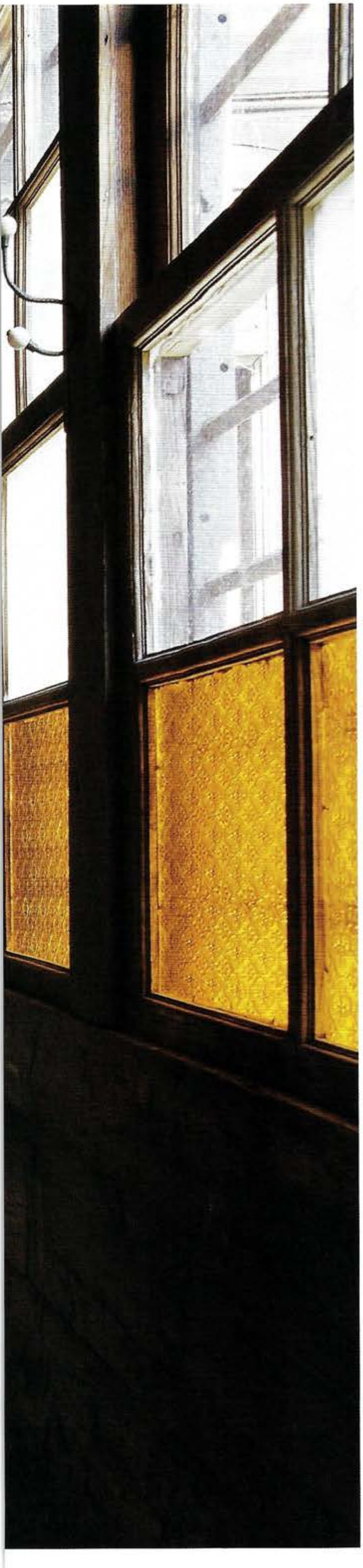




ÇAMLIHEMŞIN

THE VALLEY OF THE STORM

Çamlıhemşin is a town surrounded by clusters of country houses spread over a wide area of steep, heavily wooded hillsides. Here at Yolkıyı, two giant houses stand guard over the River Fırtına hundreds of feet below. Fırtına means "storm" and the river lives up to its name, filling the air with its roar. Yolkıyı is made up of some thirty houses linked by a path so narrow that two people can pass only with difficulty. Another complete quarter of magnificent mansions lies hidden on the hillside opposite among the giant trees of the rainforest.



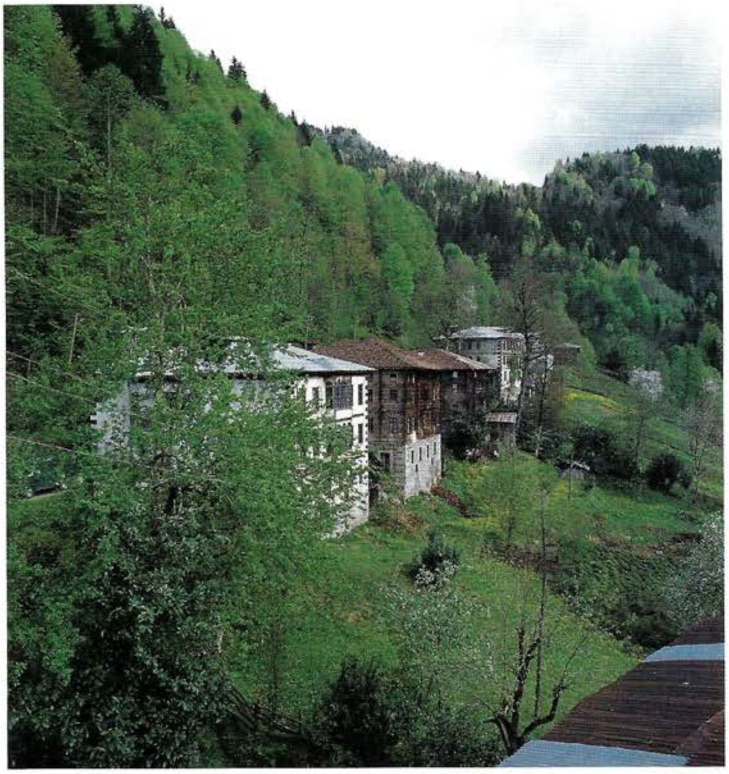
Çamlıhemşin

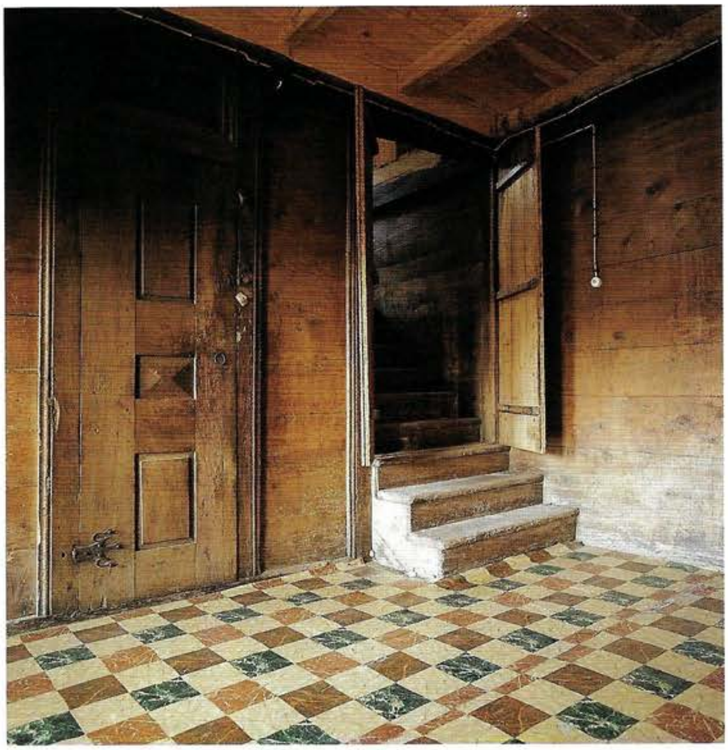
The district of Konaklar is close to the town of Çamlıhemşin, and it was here that wealthy merchants built the Black Sea's sturdiest, grandest mansions. Many of them, including restaurateurs who prospered in the Crimea in the 1900s, made their fortunes in Russia, bringing back with them a taste for stained glass and brass doorhandles.

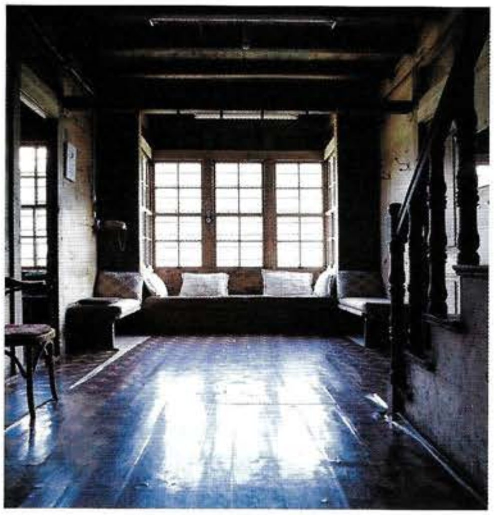
Top right: this row of imposing konaks, built in the first decade of the twentieth century, commands a wonderful view of the river.

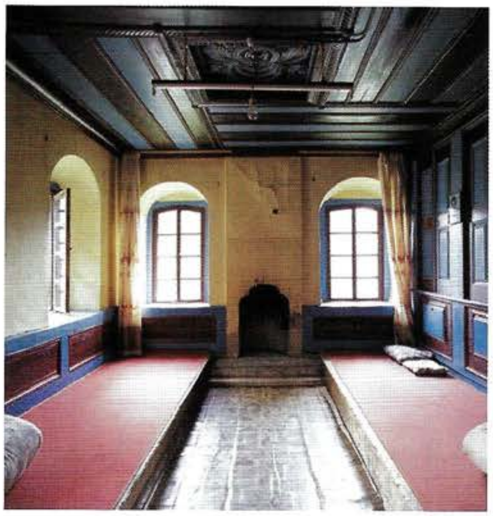
Bottom right: a corner of the living room in the Şaban Sarıoğlu Konak – the more distant of the two whitewashed houses in the picture above. The inner walls are all of solid chestnut wood.

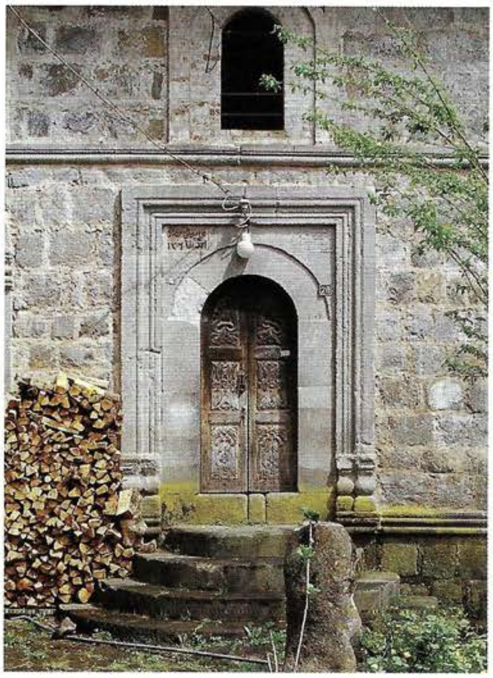
Left: this corridor is on the top floor of the Yunus Gülapoğlu Konak. In an early form of double-glazing, both inner and outer walls have windows, which insulates the house from the damp and cold.











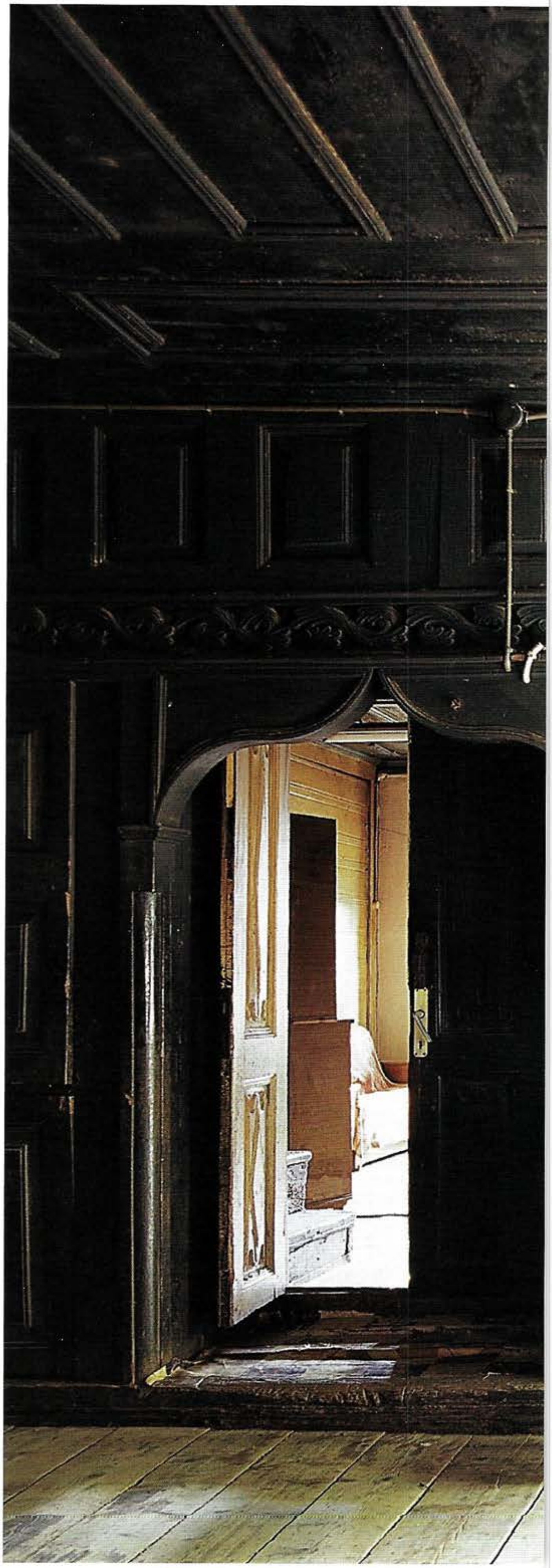
Çamlıhemşin

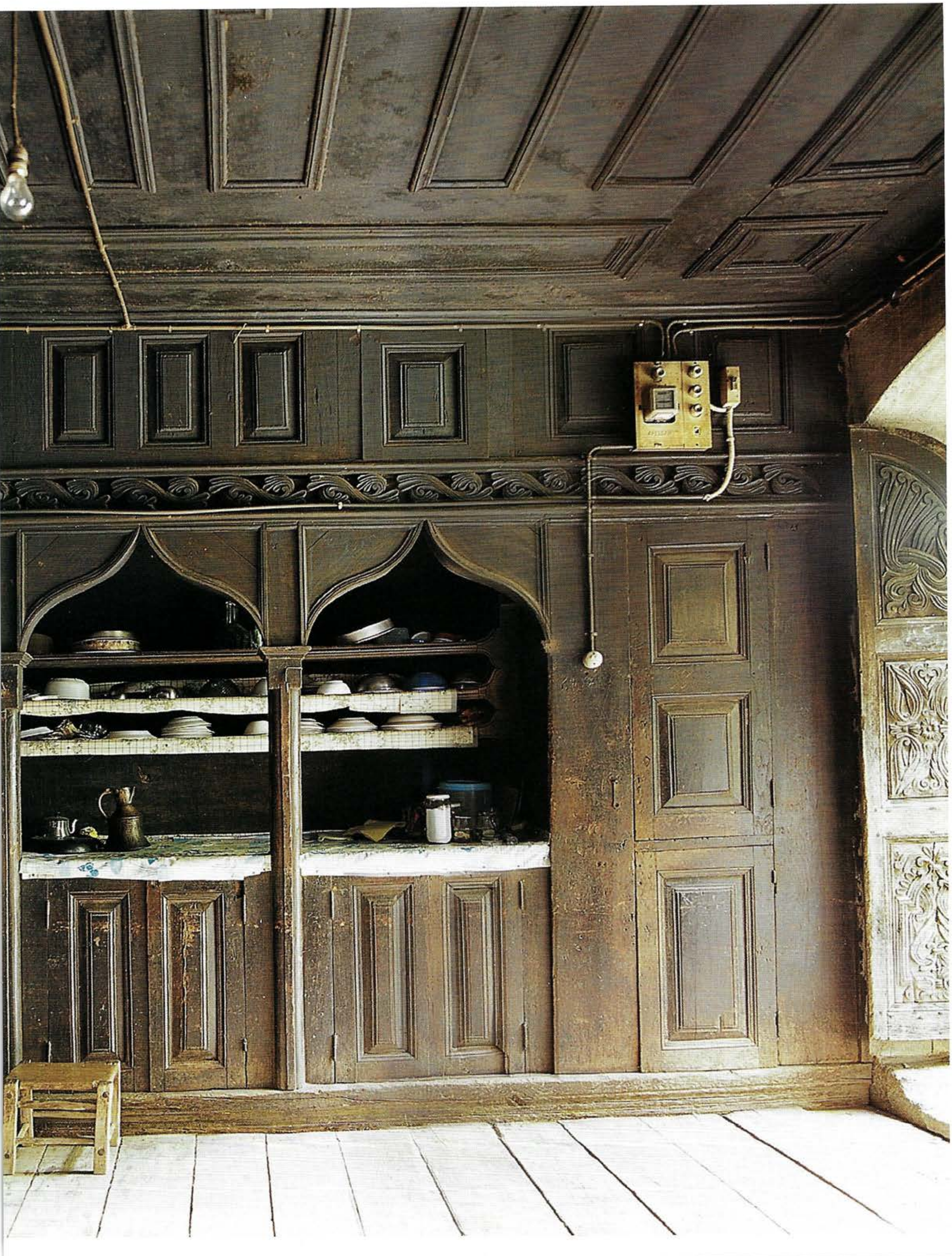
Top left: a divan fills the huge bay window in the *hayat* (living room, literally "life") of the Gülapoğlu house. Doors on either side lead to bedrooms. One of the great joys of living in a house like this is to sit in the window, with the family gathered round, gossiping, sipping tea or coffee and looking out across the valley.

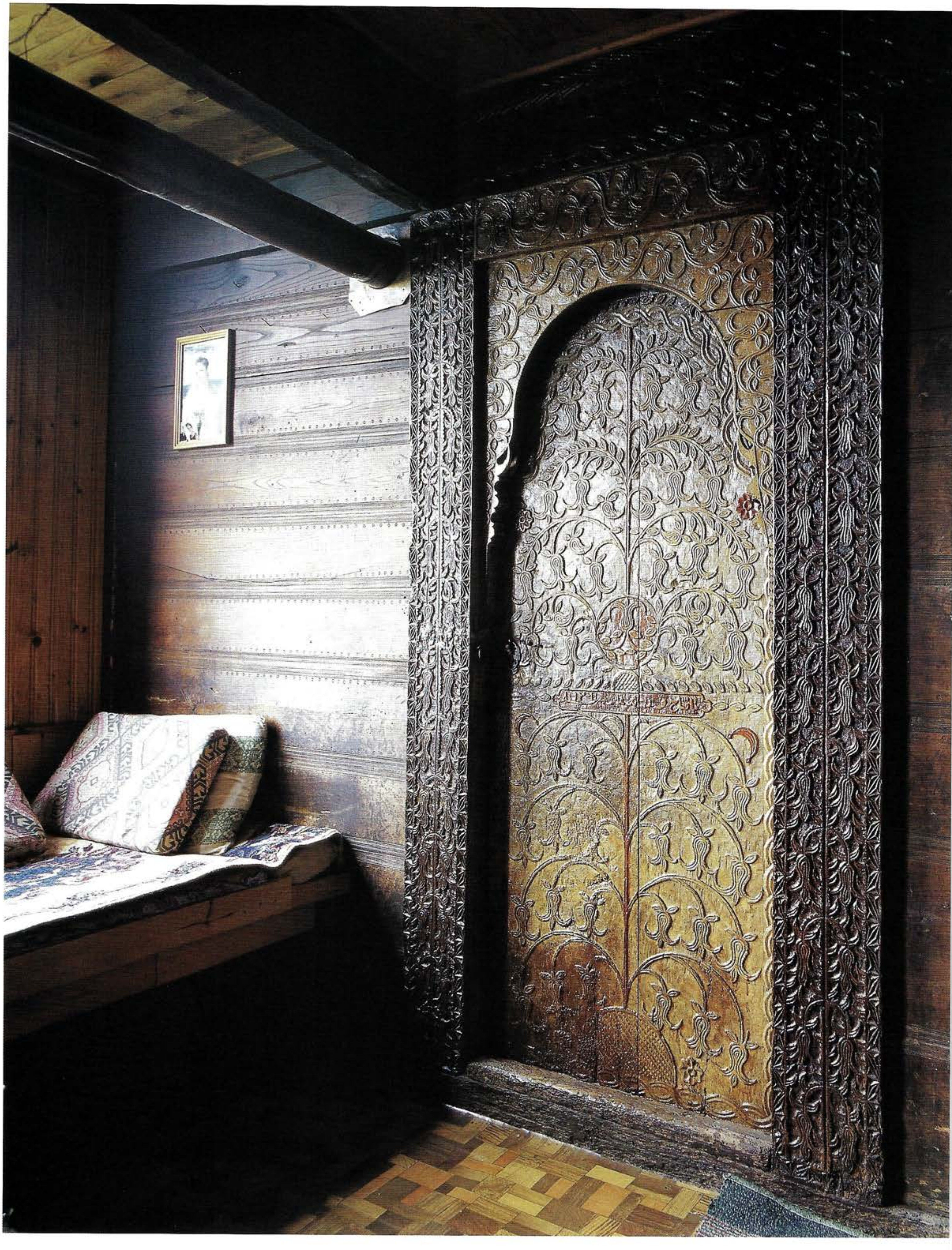
Centre left: the Galip Pelit House, in the district of Merkez Kavak, has a guest room painted in the colours of Trabzonspor football club. Raised platforms (*kerevet*) are used for sitting and sleeping; in the daytime the bedding is rolled up and put away in cupboards. Merkez Kavak is higher up the valley, and the arched windows flanking the fireplace look out over the road to the summer pastures.

Bottom left: from the outside the Galip Pelit house has an almost ecclesiastical feel. This distinctly Romanesque door leads straight into the kitchen (right). There is no shortage of firewood.

Right: nowhere else on the Black Sea is there a kitchen quite like this one. The three ogee arches in the panelled kitchen of the Galip Pelit House are unique – the craftsmen may have come from outside the region. The two arches on the right are used as cupboards, and a stool is needed to reach the top shelf. The left arch is incorporated into the doorway to the room beyond. The keystone above the front door tells us that the house was built in 1891.







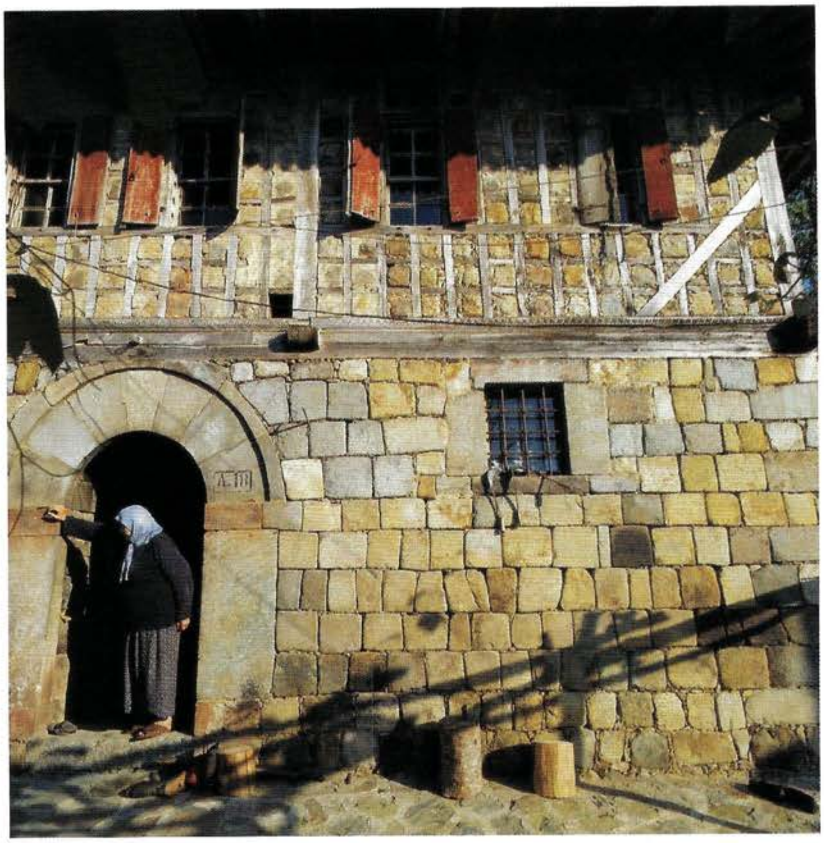
HEMŞIN GRAND FARMHOUSES

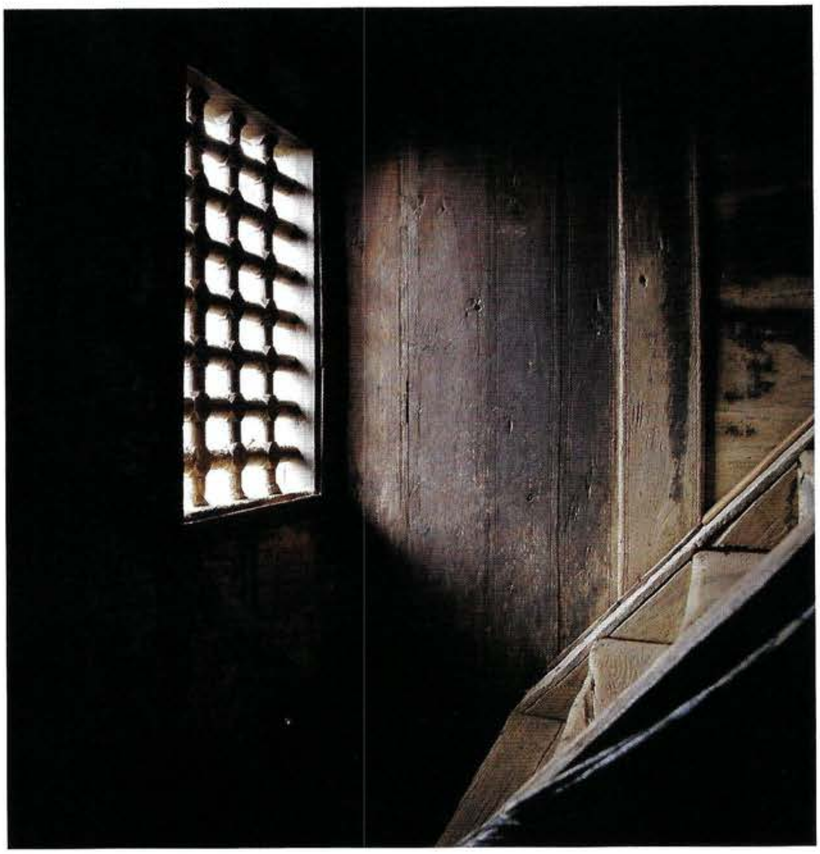
Hemşin, a few kilometres to the east of Çamlıhemşin, may lack its wealthy mansions, but it is the home of some redoutable clans. Farmhouses in the village of Bilenköy could never be described as konaks, or mansions, yet they share the same vocabulary of handsome carpentry and colossal stonework.

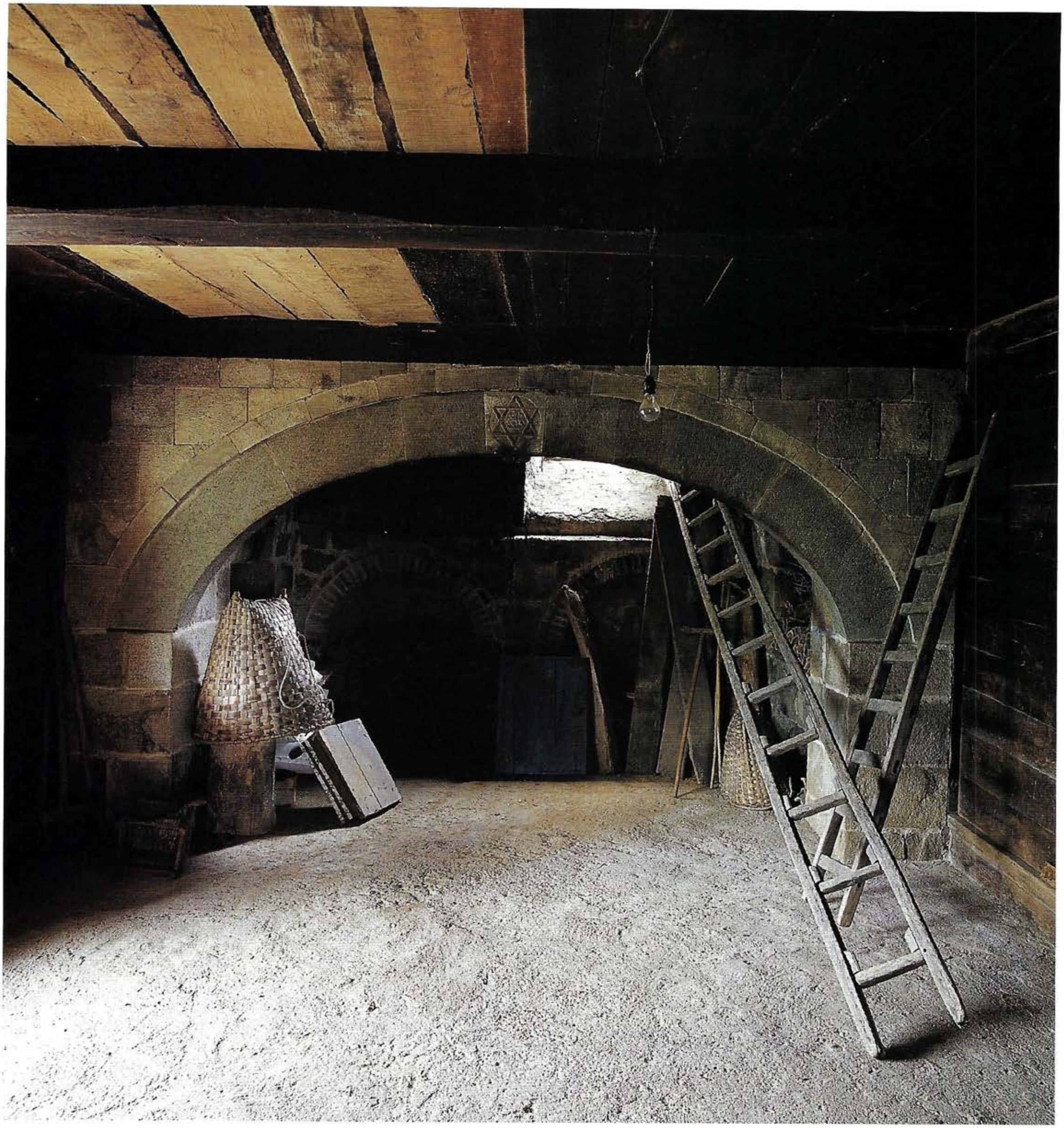
Left: the rich doorway of the house of Emrullah Doruk, dated to 1761, would not be out of place in the grandest of homes. A tree of life covers a door beneath a horseshoe arch surrounded by a frame of effusive vegetation.

Top right: ashlar masonry is laid in solid courses on the lowest of the three floors of the neighbouring Onat House, anchoring it to the hillside. Stone blocks infill the timber frame walls above. The house is entered through a stone arch that is pure Romanesque.

Right: Black Sea houses always had robust wooden grilles, made without nails, at the unglazed downstairs windows. This one sheds light onto the worn stairs leading up to the living quarters.

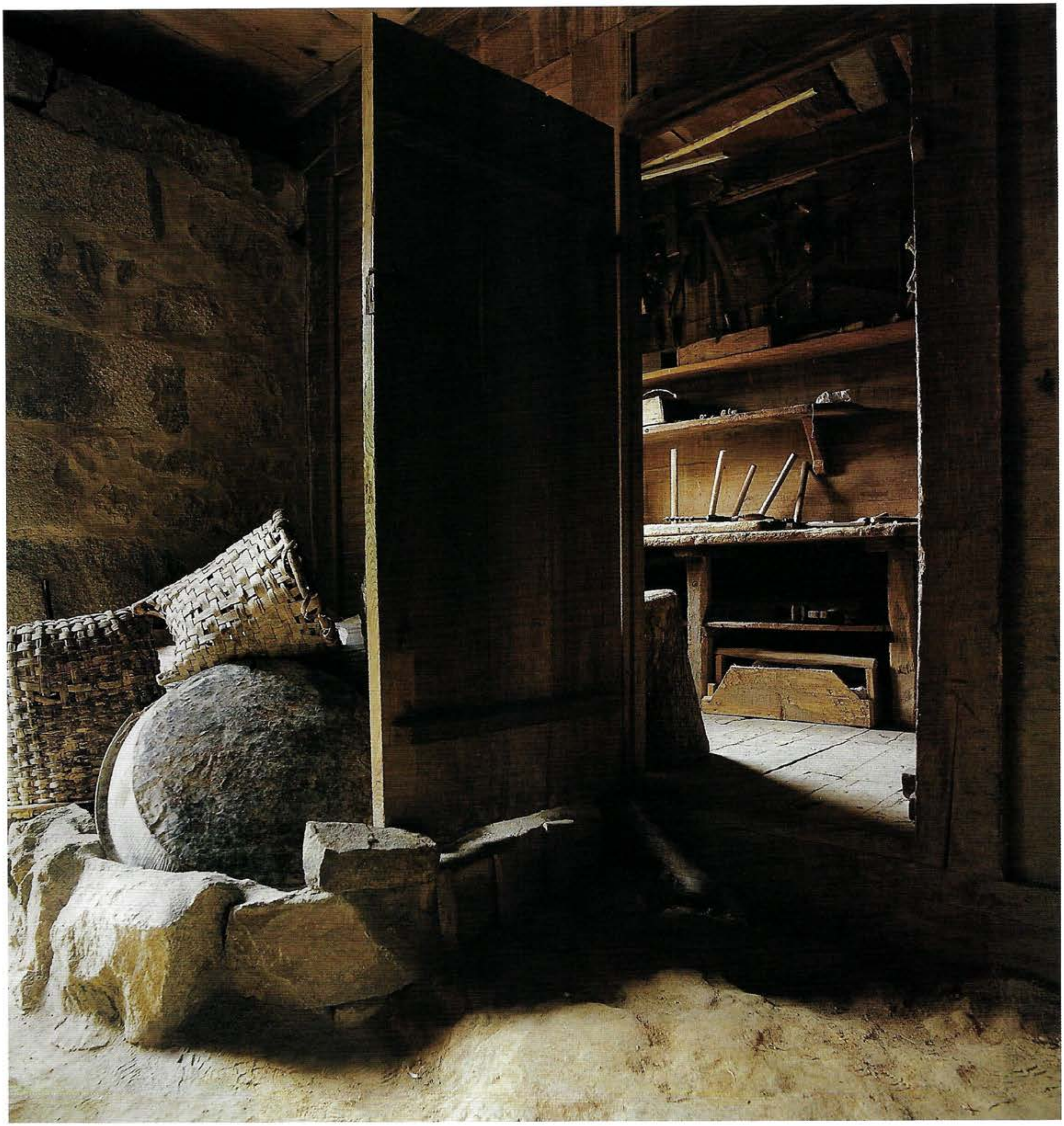




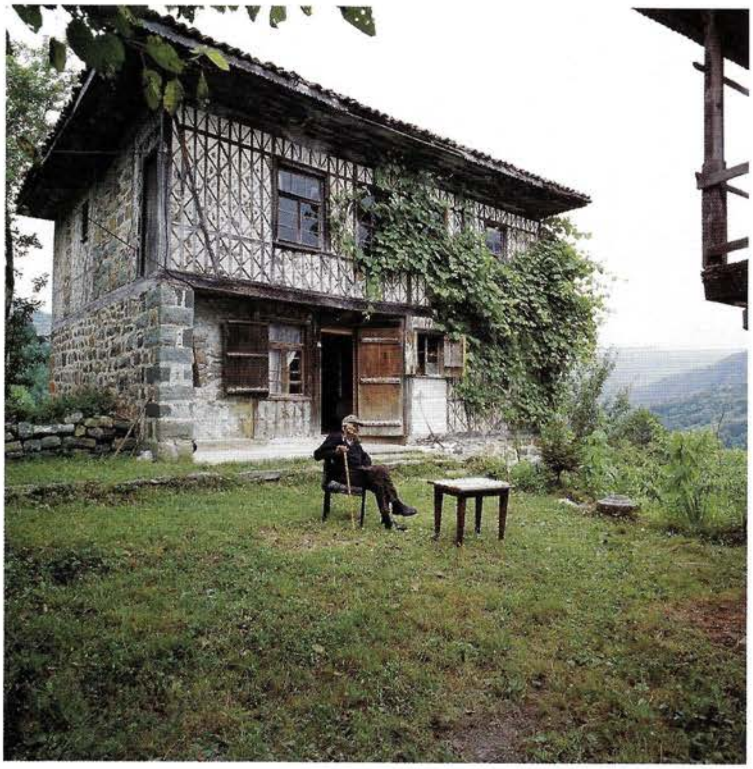


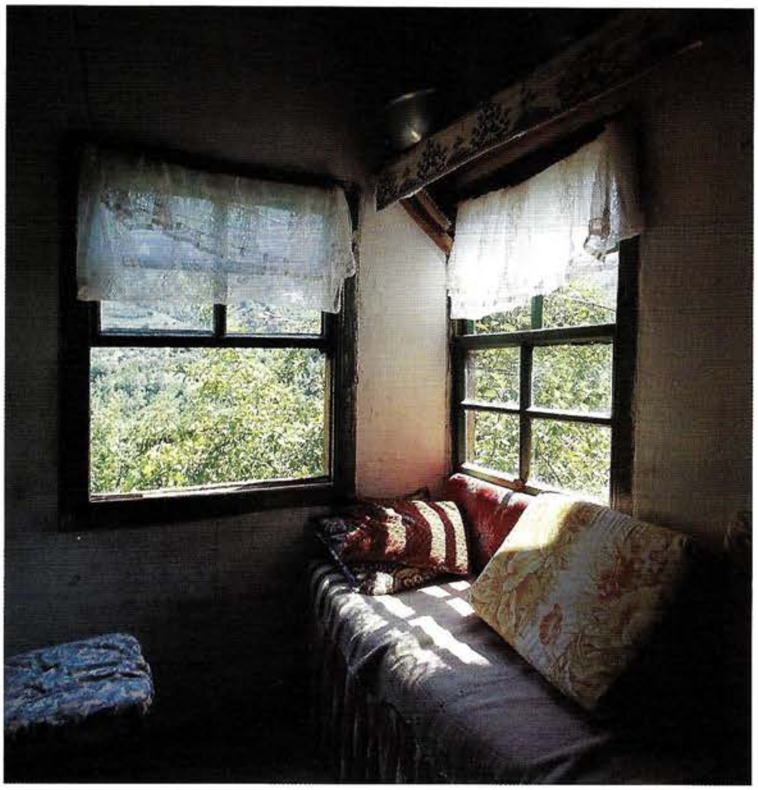
Hemşin

Yılmaz and Nazif Onat have two fine houses in Bilenköy: the one they live in and an empty one, seen in these two photographs. Its enormous fireplace is a sign of the original owner's wealth, a feature shared by all the larger houses in Hemşin and neighbouring Çamlıhemşin. The sacred nature of the hearth is emphasised by the seal of Solomon on the arch's keystone. The arched fireplace is as wide as the room it was designed for and is a marvel of engineering. With a perfect through-draught, the fire lit straight on the floor would be used for cooking and for heating the whole building.



The ground floor holds the essential tools of life: baskets worn by women harvesting tea and walnuts, great basins for washing, and shelves for storing produce. The room next door is a carpentry workshop. In their heyday, houses such as the Onats' were hives of industry. Despite their remoteness, the valleys of the eastern Black Sea were more densely populated than almost anywhere else in rural Turkey – so much so that the land could not support all the inhabitants. Many were forced to leave.



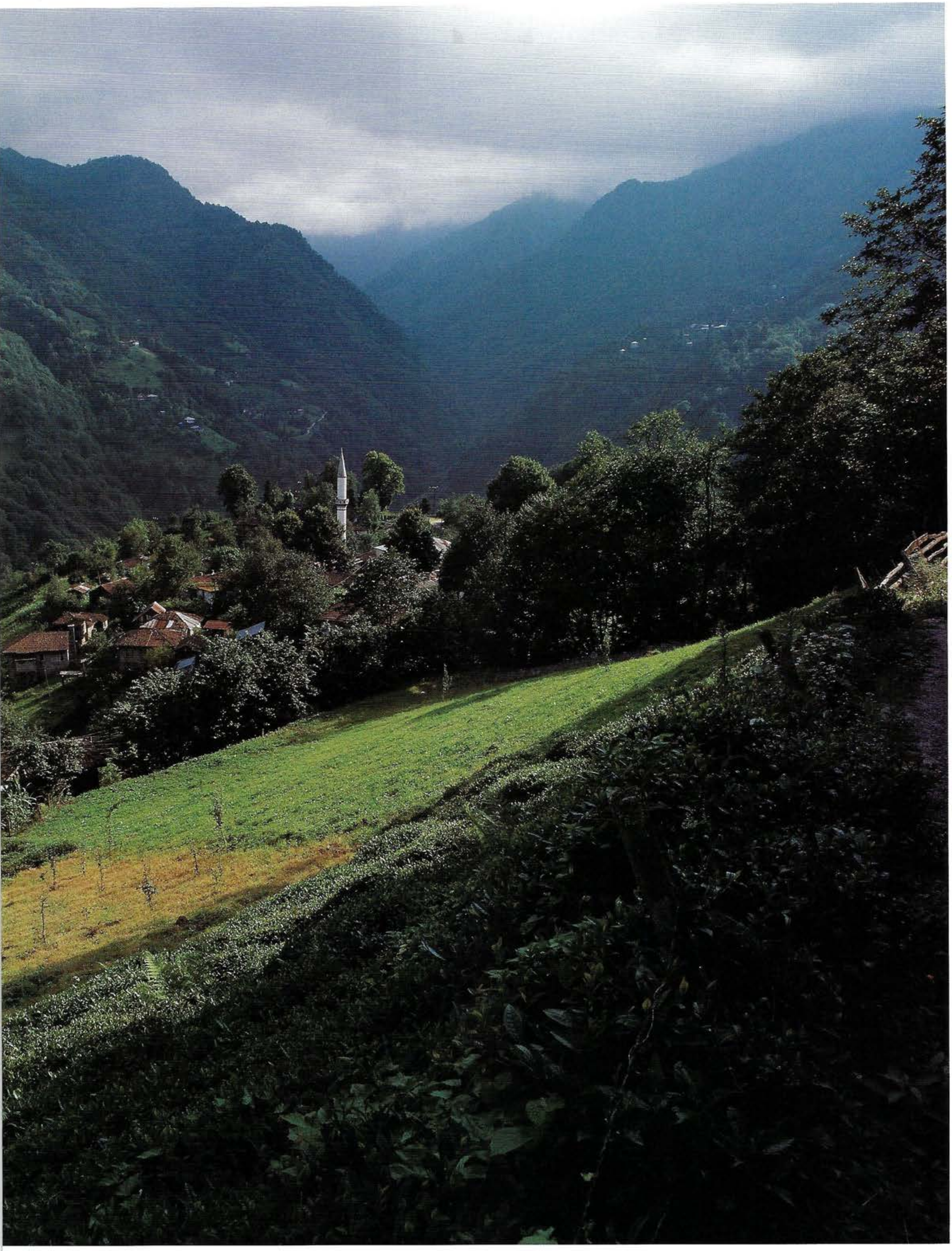


ARHAVI FAIRY-TALE VALLEYS

Right: the area above the small port of Arhavi is more accessible than many of the densely wooded valleys of the Black Sea. Some thirty villages thrive here. Ortaca is one of them, pinpointed by the minaret. Surrounding the village are orchards and tea gardens. Tea was only introduced to the area in 1934. Before that villages survived on trade with the Caucasus and crops of hazelnuts, corn and hemp.

Top left: the house of Sabri Nazmi Kosif stands on a hillside in Arılıköy, a hamlet that can just be seen in the distance in the picture on the right. The north and west façades, exposed to wind and rain, are built of solid stone. A technique similar to the "eye-filling" style seen in Çağlayan is used for the attractive façade on the south and eastern sides. Here the stone infill is triangular instead of square, and the technique is known as *muskalı dolma*, or "amulet-filling", after the triangular amulets worn to ward off the evil eye. The wood framework is filled with stone pieces secured by clay mortar. Two upstairs bedrooms are entirely concealed by a vine with richly scented black grapes peculiar to the Black Sea.

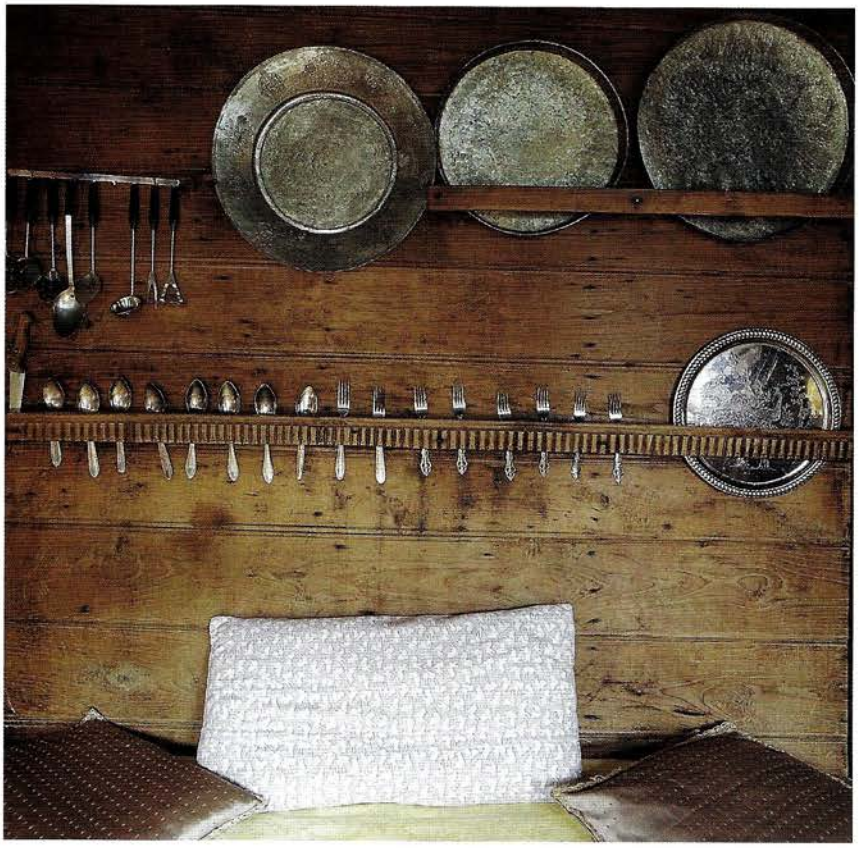
Bottom left: in nearby Borçka, sun shines through large square windows onto an inviting divan.

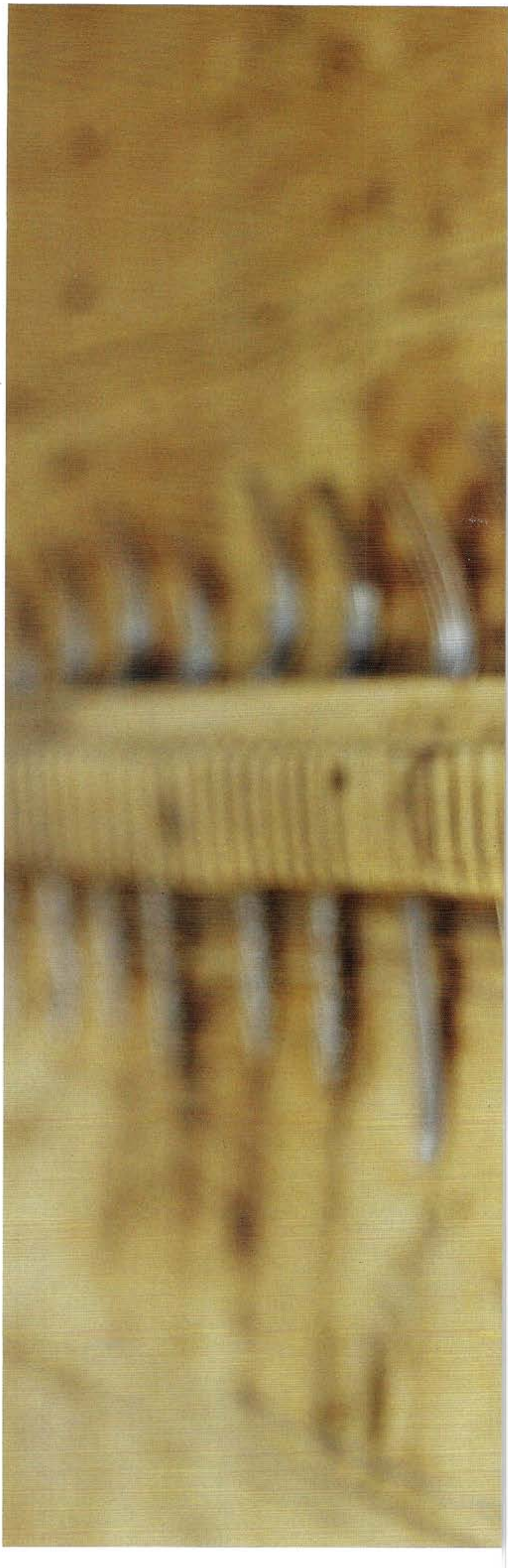


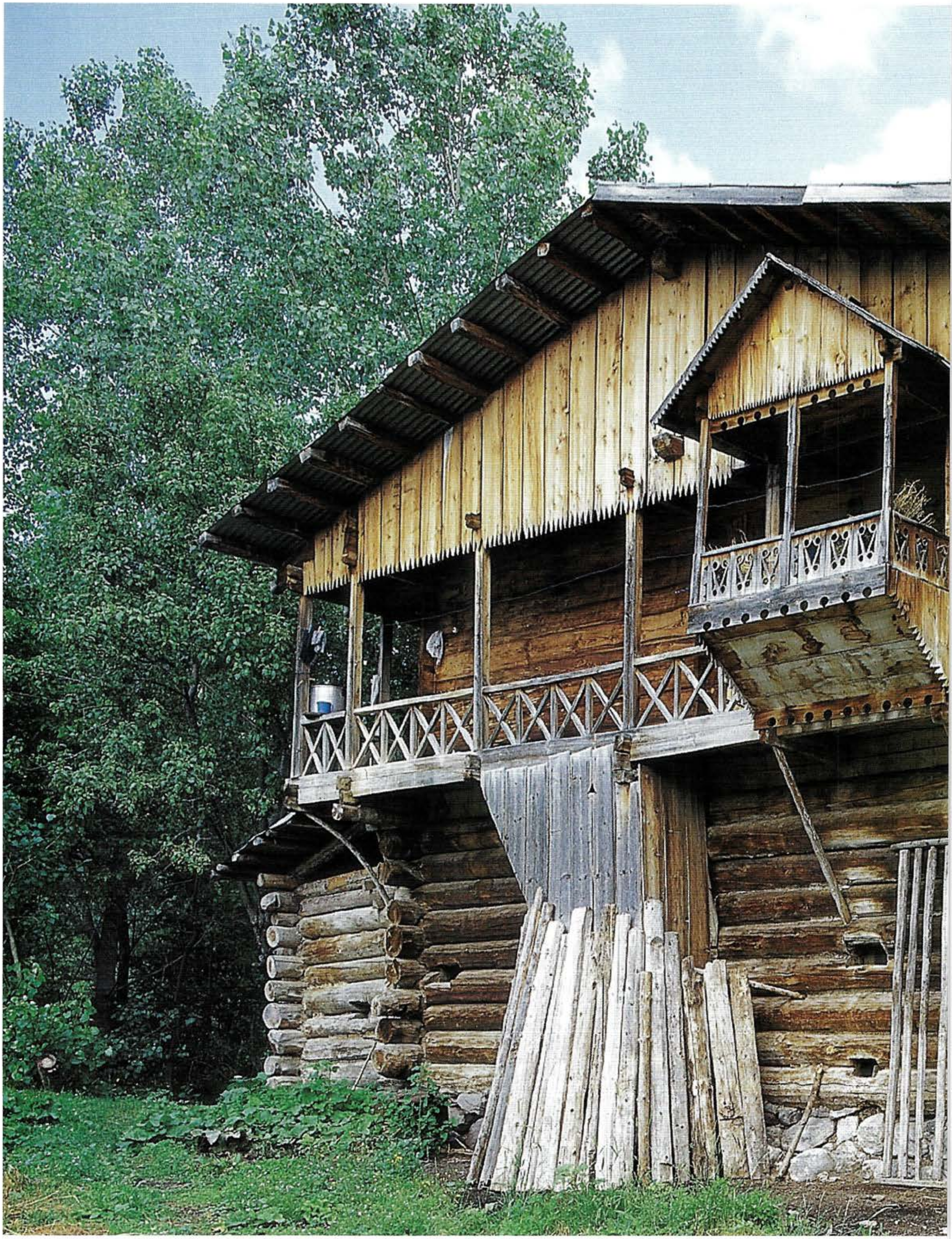
Arhavi

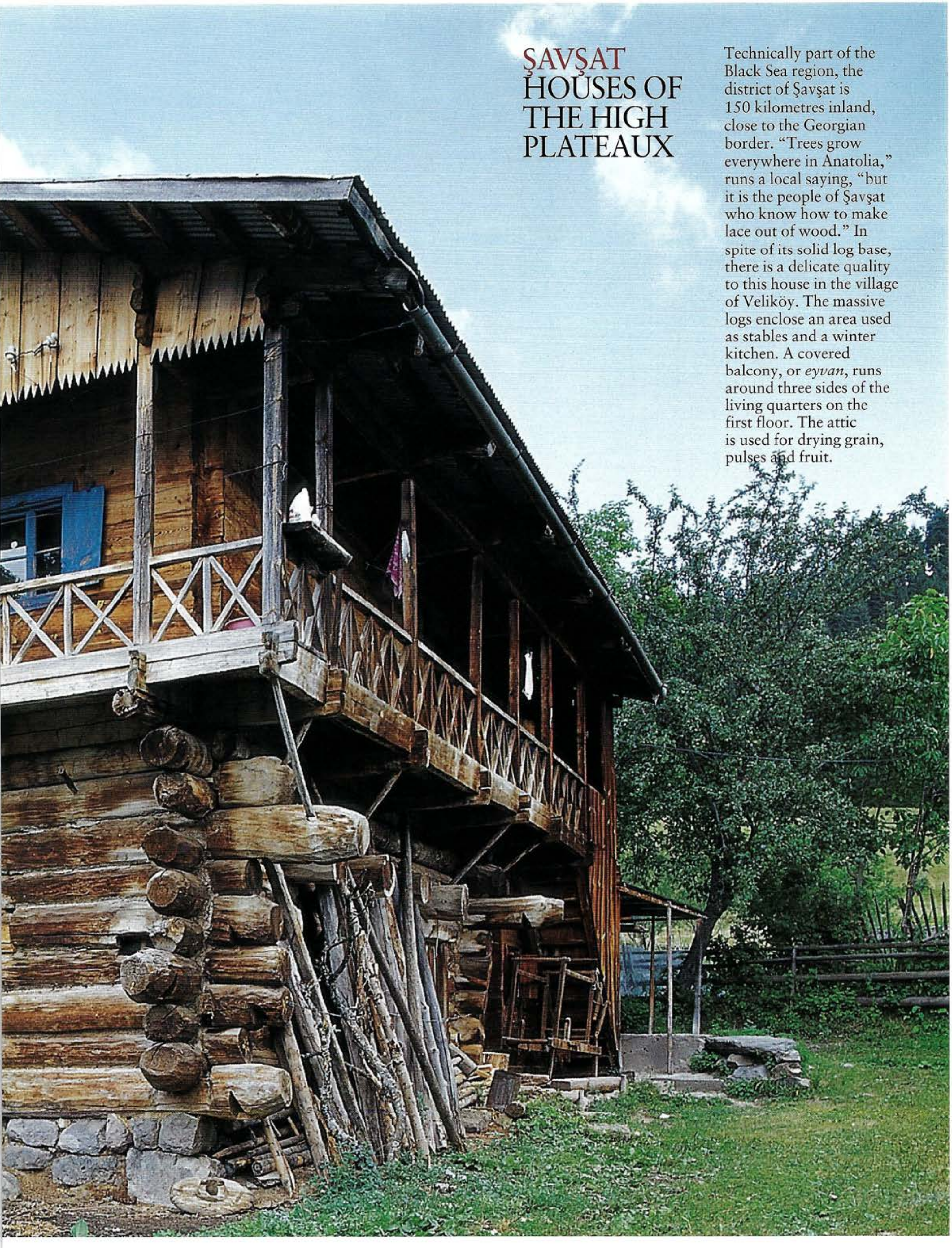
Right: old Anatolian houses were never cluttered. There was a place for everything. In this house in Arılıköy, a couple of simple carved strips of wood provide elegant storage for a row of spoons and forks.

Below: dishes are still generally communal and families gather round a large tray to eat. A row of handsome tinned copper dishes and baking trays is stored in a rack above the cutlery. The seating beneath is low, as is all furniture in these minimalist houses.



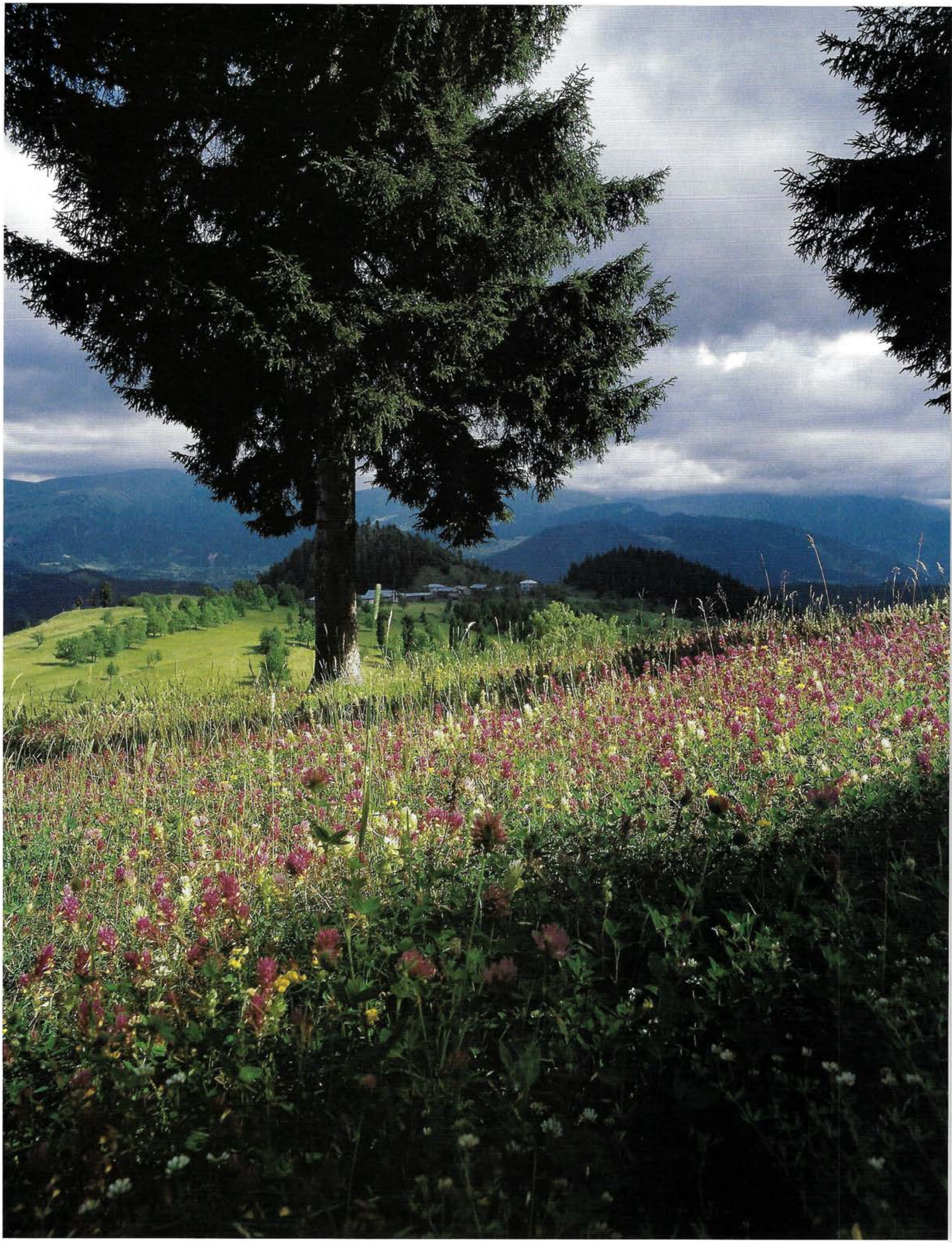






ŞAVŞAT HOUSES OF THE HIGH PLATEAUX

Technically part of the Black Sea region, the district of Şavşat is 150 kilometres inland, close to the Georgian border. "Trees grow everywhere in Anatolia," runs a local saying, "but it is the people of Şavşat who know how to make lace out of wood." In spite of its solid log base, there is a delicate quality to this house in the village of Veliköy. The massive logs enclose an area used as stables and a winter kitchen. A covered balcony, or *eyvan*, runs around three sides of the living quarters on the first floor. The attic is used for drying grain, pulses and fruit.

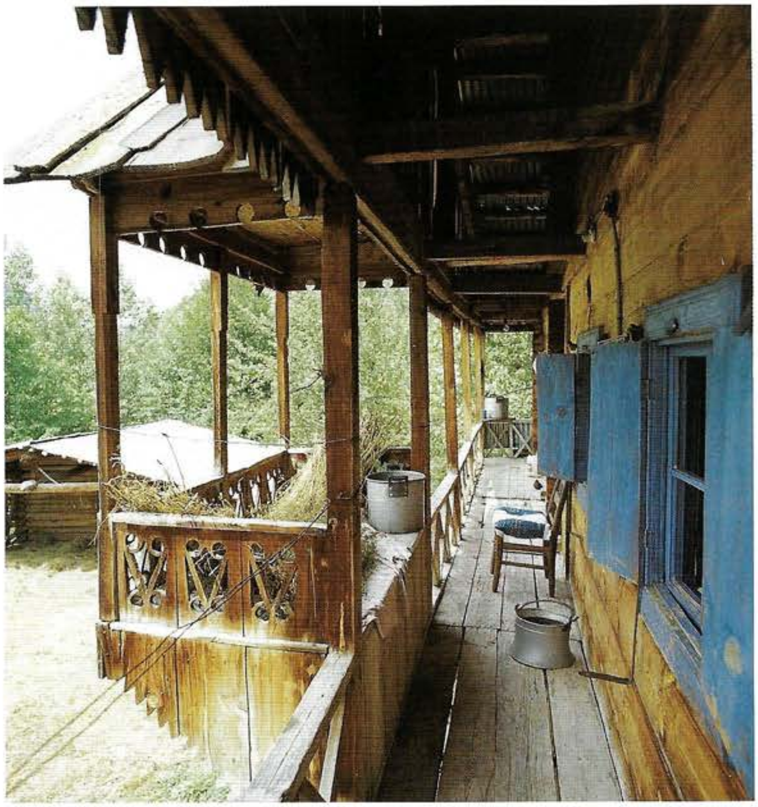


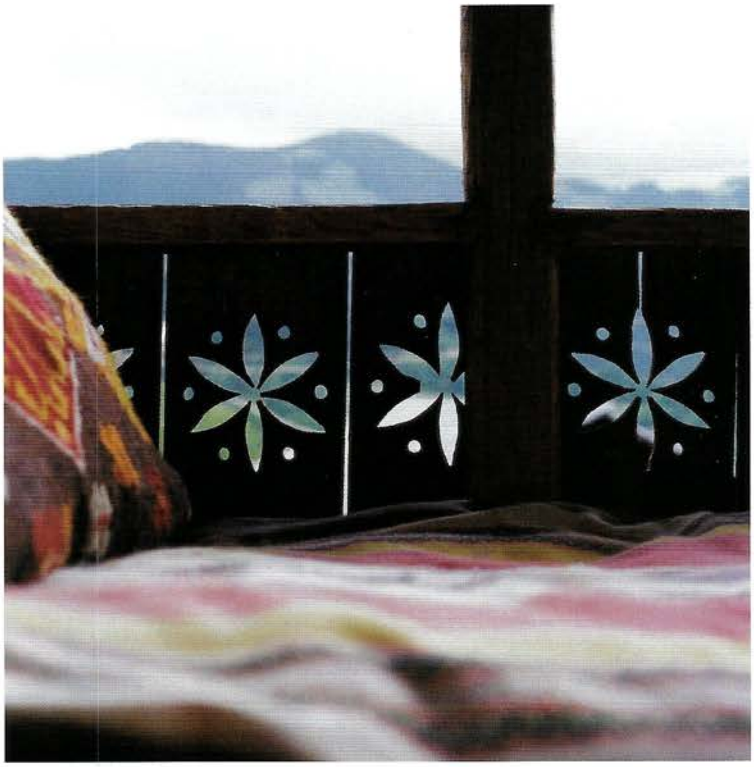
Şavşat

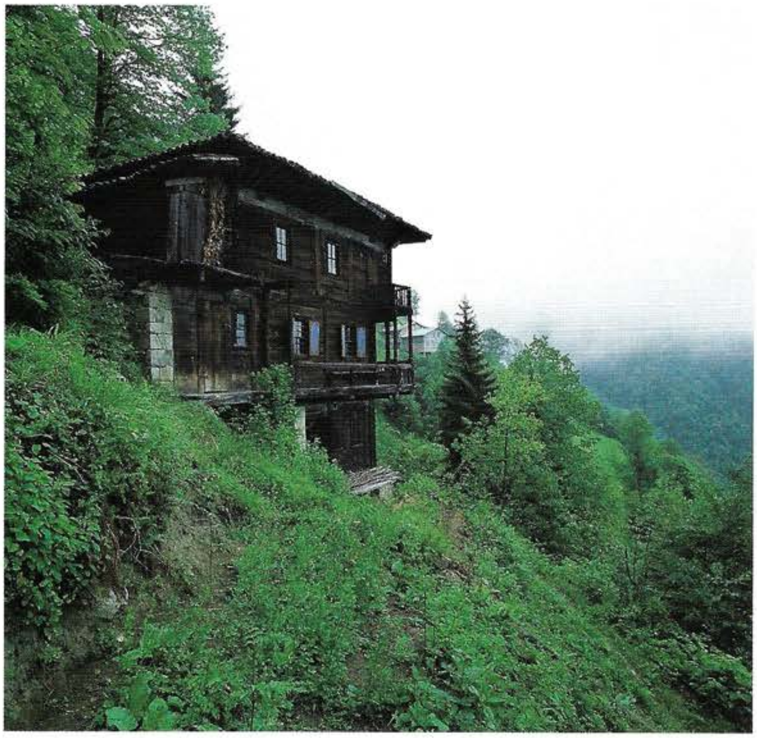
Top right: the balcony of the house in Veliköy pictured on the previous page serves as kitchen and living room in the warmer months. The charming overhang with its raised platform becomes the favourite sitting-out area when not being used as an all-purpose table. From the Balkans to the Caucasus this typical feature is known as a *köşk*, or kiosk.

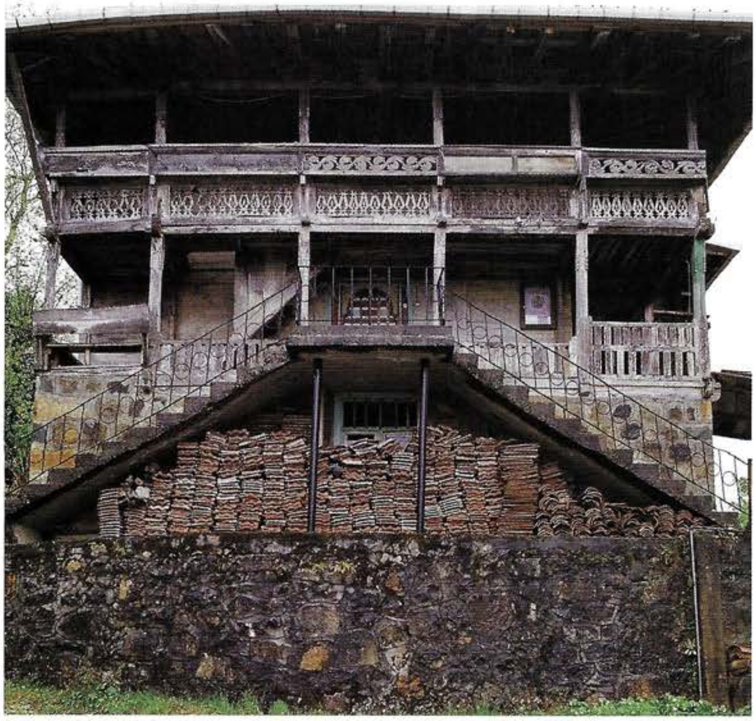
Bottom right: another *köşk*, this one in the village of Kocabey, is brightened up with a pierced flower design. The platform is covered with kilims and cushions.

Left: a meadow of honey-scented clover on the high plateau above the village of Meşeliköy. Two fine Oriental spruce trees frame a view of the distant hills that surround the famous lake of Karagöl.









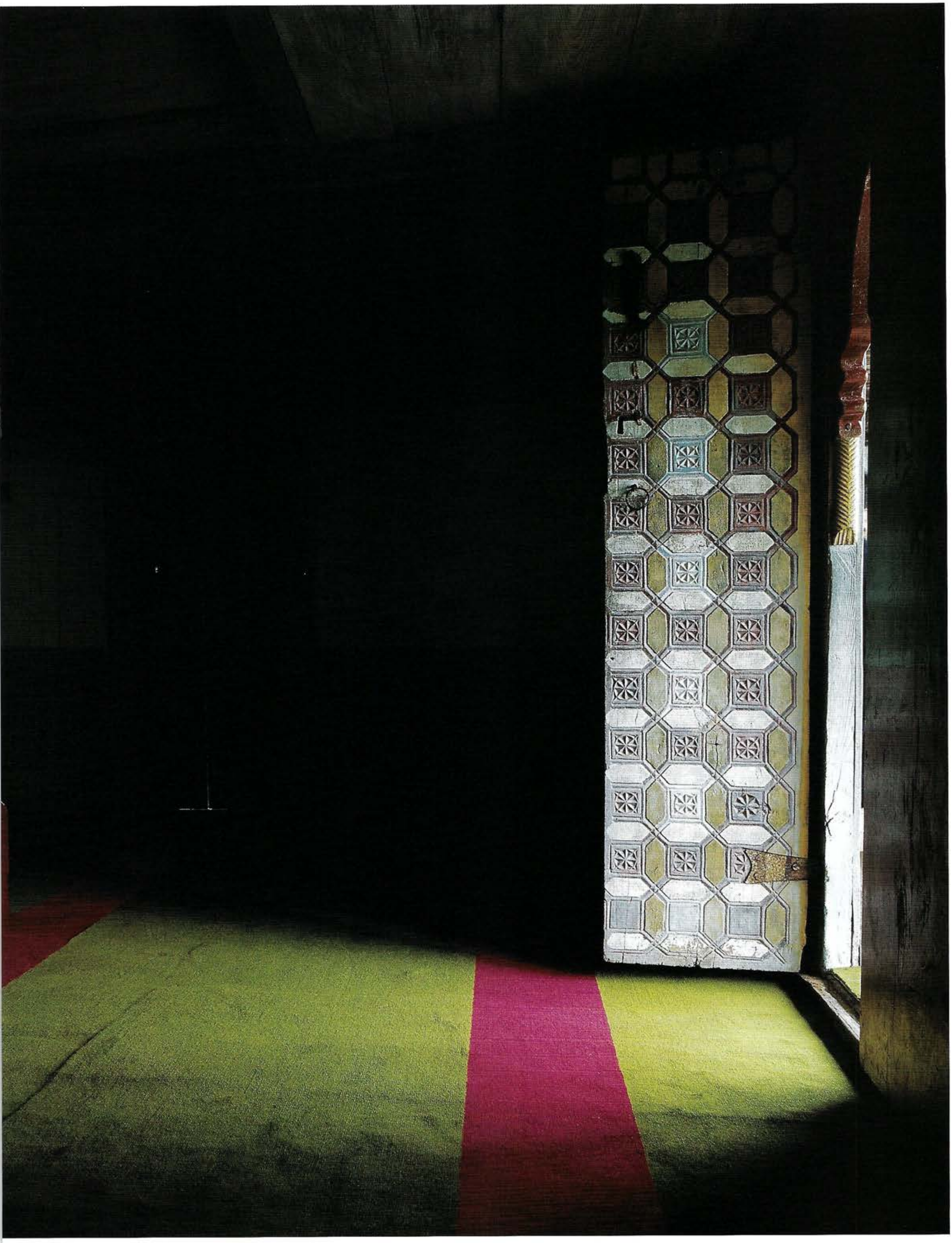
RIZE
MOSQUES IN THE RAINFOREST

In the mountainous hinterland above Rize, a city famed for its tea, mosques traditionally looked like houses. They had balconies, square windows and shutters and were built with the same materials and techniques.

Top left: the mosque of Şenköy, a peaceful village in the Çamlıhemşin valley, seems almost to grow out of the wooded landscape. The windows are small, the interior dark, austere and very atmospheric.

Bottom left: in the village of Bilenköy, in the Hemşin valley, the mosque is again built entirely of wood. But its entrance is more imposing, with elaborate carving, a double staircase and a two-tiered veranda. From the unpainted exterior one would never expect the riot of colour within.

Right: the exterior of the door to the Bilenköy mosque is carved with rosettes and interlaced octagons, now covered with faded, peeling paint.



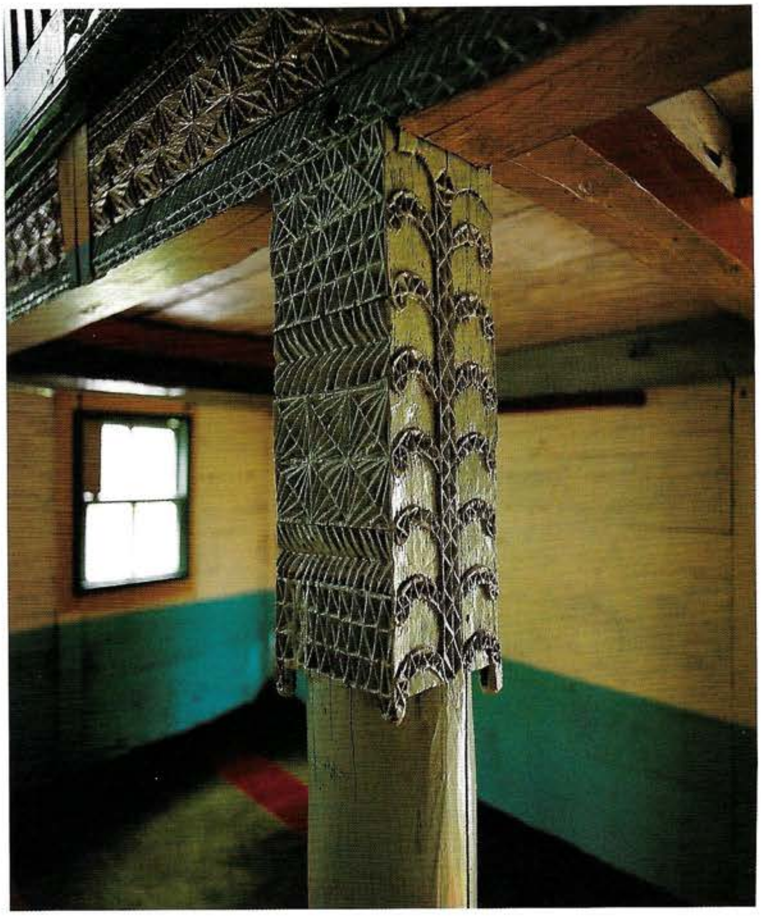
Mosques

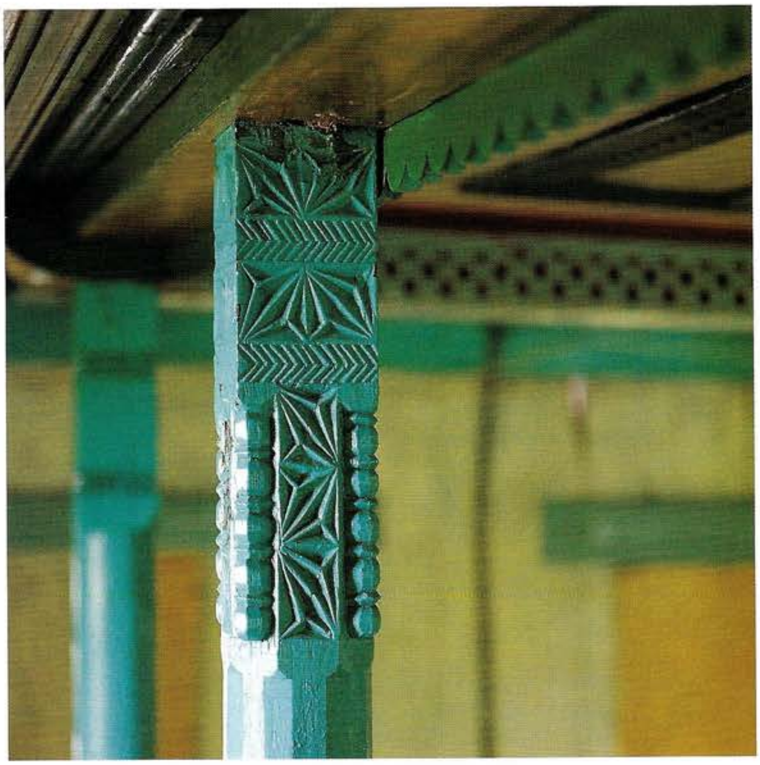
Restraint is not the keynote inside the Bilenköy mosque. The building is nineteenth-century, as are most of the carvings, but the colour scheme is outrageously modern. The carpet combines brilliant fuchsia with acid green, while the woodwork is a rainbow of yellow, turquoise, reds and numerous shades of green.

Left: a gallery runs round three sides of the interior.

Top right: the square capitals of the columns supporting the gallery are carved with tree of life motifs on two sides and deeply incised with stylised geometric floral motifs on the others.

Bottom right: one of the columns on the gallery that support the ceiling.





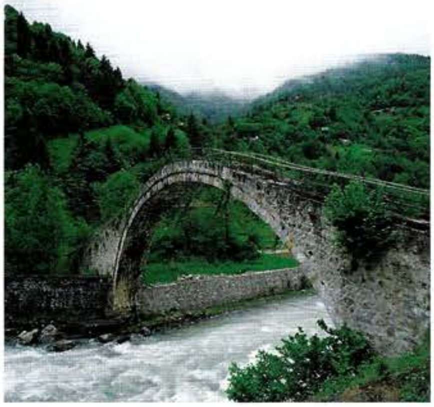
THE STONES OF SÜRMENE

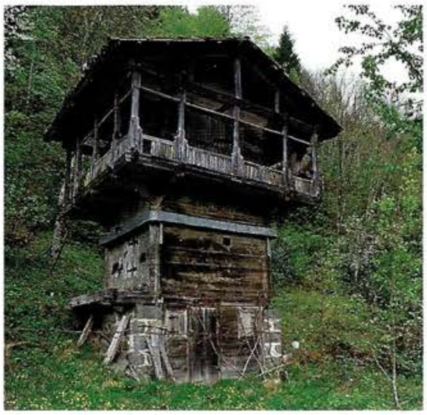
Michael Meeker sets out to decipher the architecture of a

With its bay sparkling hundreds of metres below, the vista from above the town of Sürmene, forty kilometres east of Trabzon, is one of the most stunningly beautiful along the eastern Black Sea coast. I had set out on a tour of these mountains with, as my guide, a passionate amateur historian who has devoted his life to a study of the area.

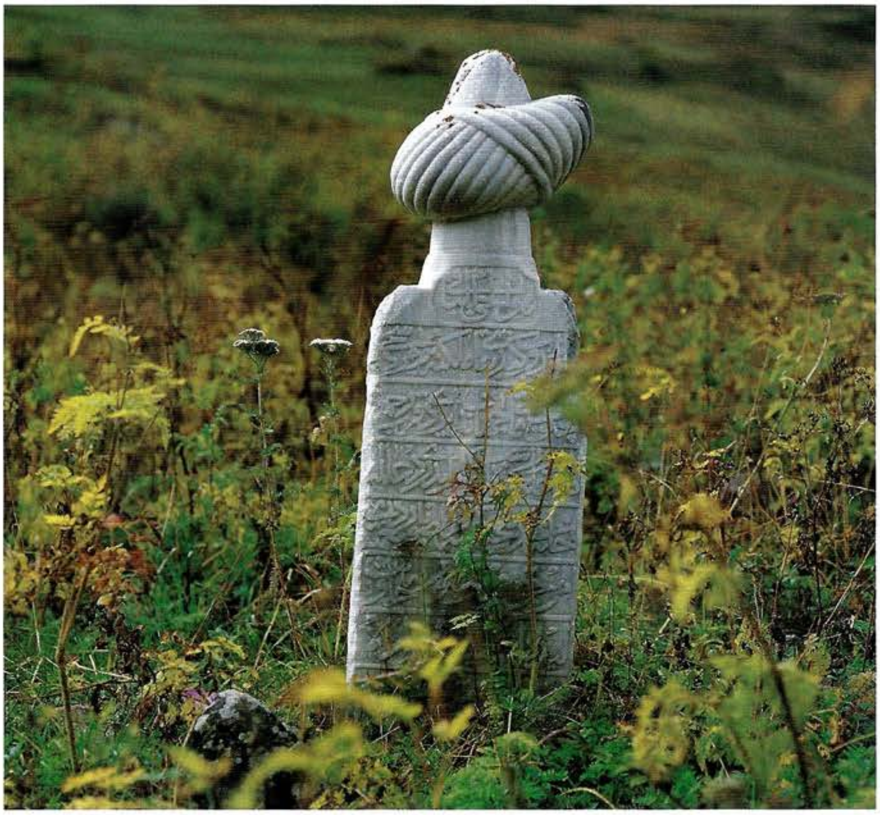
"This is the very spot where Xenophon is said to have first observed the sea as he led his army out of Persia," Mr Aslan announced as we reached one of the hilltops that seem to hang over the bay. Was this true? Who could say? Certainly the spot deserved its reputation by virtue of its breathtaking panorama.

Thanks to the network of roads that first began to link mountain villages in the 1950s and 1960s, we were able to make the trip by car. It was a thrilling drive. Here and there we lurched forward, wheels spinning out of control as we climbed the vertiginous slopes. I was treated to a series of fascinating scenes. Stopping at a roadside forest, Mr Aslan led the way through the undergrowth, then tore away the brush to reveal tombstones bearing dates from the late Ottoman period. Each was topped by a stone-carved emblem indicating the sex of the deceased and, if male, his status as a cleric or government official. Higher up, perched on mountain bluffs, were the walled graveyards of distinguished families, some of recent construction, some Ottoman.



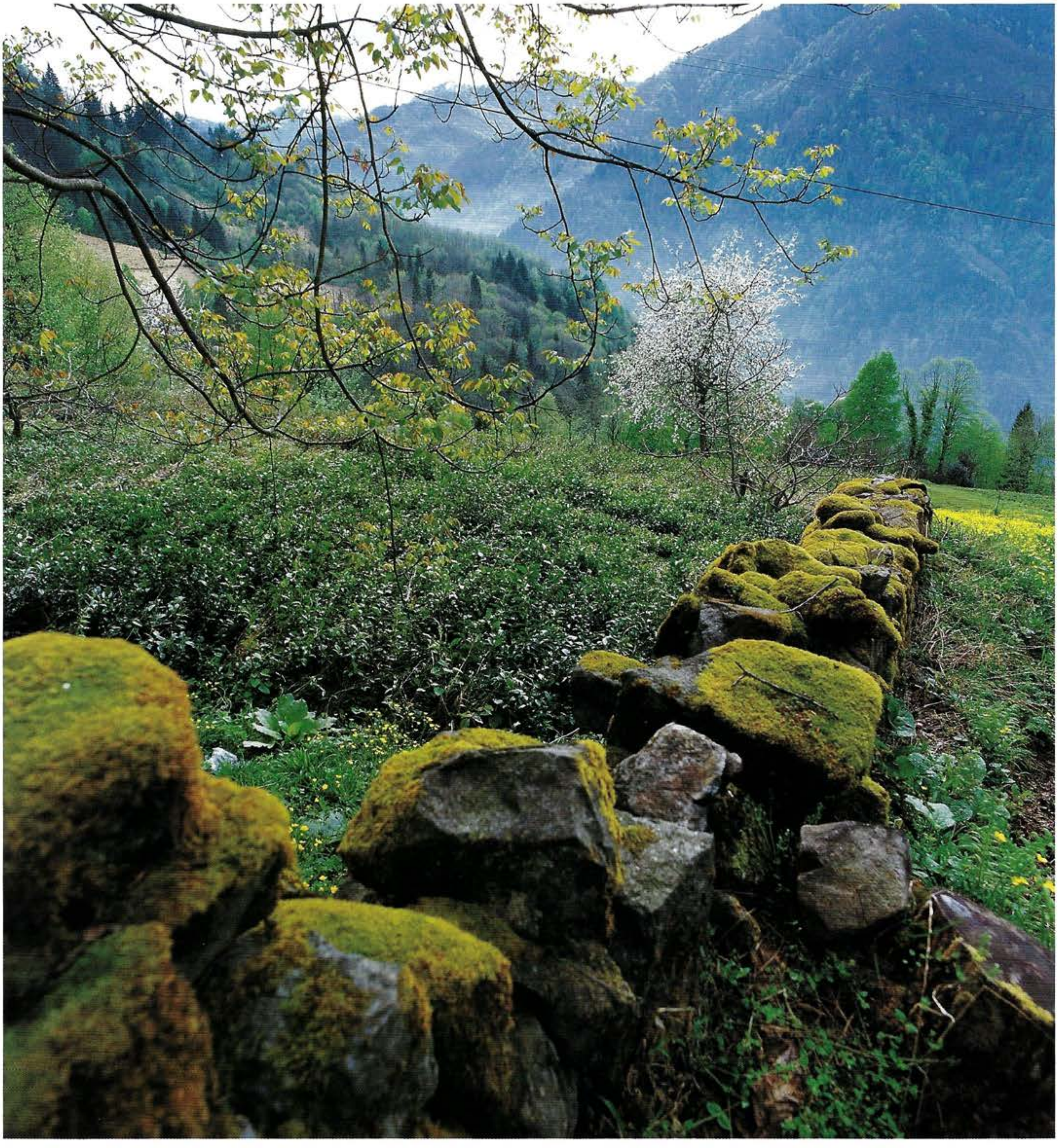


Above: designed to withstand fierce flash floods, one of the many ancient bridges spanning the Black Sea rivers. Above right: a typical 'serander', or granary. Below: on a remote hillside above Sürmene, a 19th-century turbaned headstone marks the grave of a man of God. Opposite: a dry stone wall with a coat of moss



At one stage of our winding journey Mr Aslan pointed out a secret route through the foothills, used by Russian troops for their invasion of the coastal districts in 1916. Most foreign observers claim that the coastline provides the only convenient way to travel east and west. Neither the Turkish nor the Russian military were ever troubled by such a misperception.

In many places our road intersected or paralleled the course of older trade routes: dirt or cobbled tracks crossed by wooden or stone bridges of medieval origin. Higher still, we could observe the principal trade route that has linked the coastline with the interior for many hundreds of years, snaking across the ridges of vivid green but treeless mountains, sometimes disappearing in the clouds that hang in the valleys. Here and there along its way, small clusters of storerooms and warehouses



were visible, little mini-caravansarays of wood and stone, some still in use.

As an historically minded anthropologist, my special interest lay less with Xenophon than in the area's variety of family life and housing. How, I wondered, had these been influenced by the broad historical changes the Black Sea coastal region had undergone over the centuries?

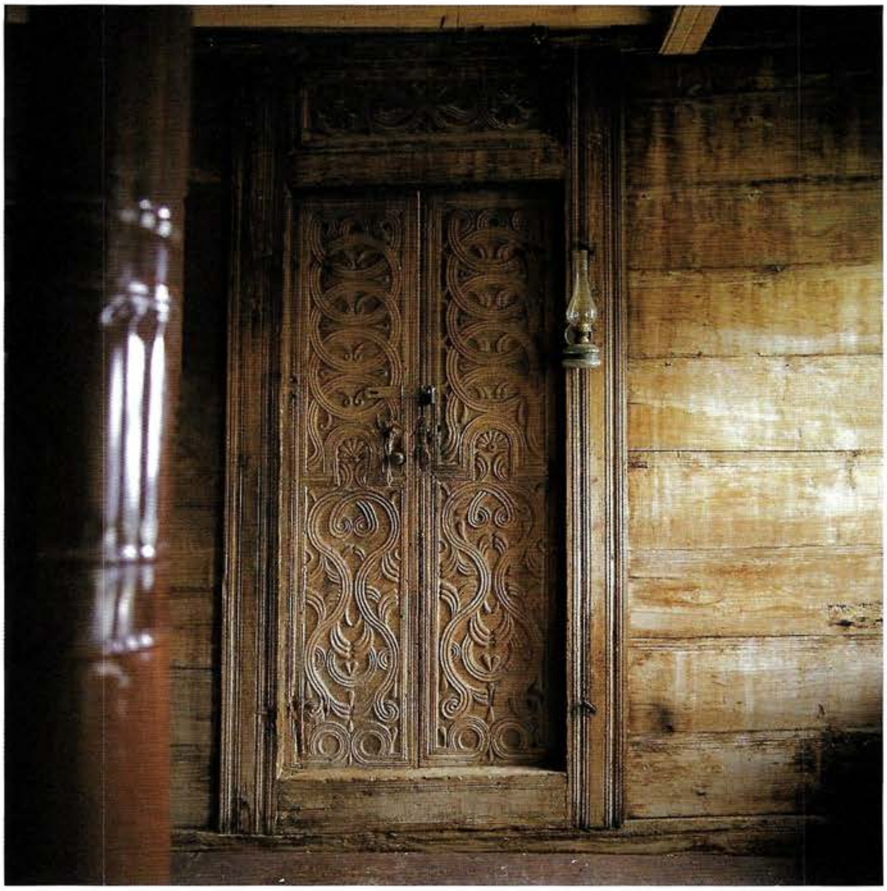
Surely, I had originally thought when I went to live in the area, language and religion must determine styles of family life and house structure. In the district called Of, for example, I had learnt that many of the tools and methods of construction could be traced to practices of the Greek rather than the Turkic population, and that the hearths of Christian houses were situated differently from those in Muslim houses.

Eventually I realised it was not that simple, that ethnicity and religion had been fluid rather than fixed. The region had been settled at different times by a number of ethnic groups – Lazi, Armenians, Greeks and Turks – who had lived under a succession of imperial regimes espousing different religions. But no group had preserved a pure "ethnic" tradition. For example, there were Christian Turks in the region during both the late Byzantine and early Ottoman periods, some of whom probably became Greek-speakers. And in the twentieth century there were Muslim Greeks, Muslim Lazi and Muslim Armenians, many of whom had become Turkish-speakers.

Such crossovers persuaded me to alter the focus of my research. I began to consider the issue of how an ethnically and religiously diverse population had been ottomanised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I set aside the question of discovering the "original" or "primordial" way of life in the region to focus instead on change and variety in the patterns of family life and house structure.

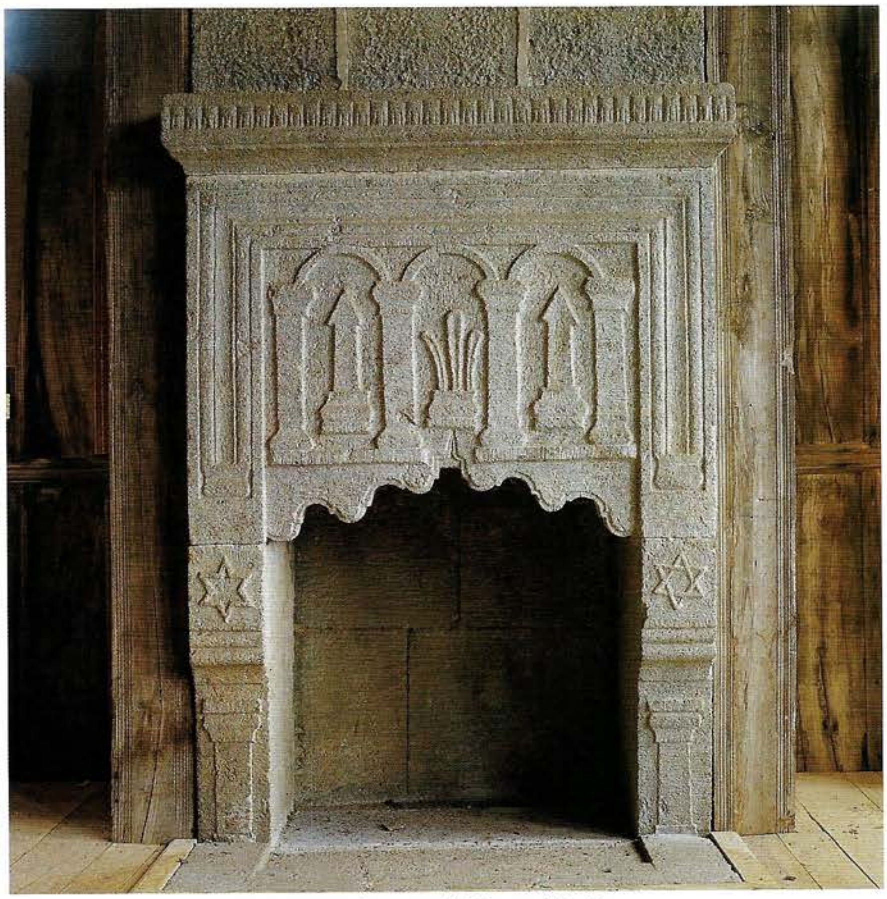
As we toured the foothills and mountains of Sürmene, Mr Aslan showed me dwellings, maize granaries, pilgrim fountains and walled gardens in a remarkable range of types and styles that opened my eyes to the complexity of official and domestic architecture.

It is important to understand the relationship of Sürmene to Trabzon. From the medieval period, Trabzon was a walled and fortified town that served as the capital of all the coastal districts from Batum in the east to Ordu in the west. But until recently it was Sürmene, rather than Trabzon, that offered the shortest path from the coast to the trade routes of the interior. This enabled Sürmene's bay, market and town to compete commercially with those of the provincial capital. The topography of Sürmene, however, posed a security risk. The foothills rising so abruptly from the bay may offer stunning views, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they also proved ideal sites for the local elites to build fortified residences from which they competed for control of the town. Those who came out on top could hope to benefit from the collection of taxes, some of which they passed on to Trabzon, some of which they kept for themselves.


SINUOUS, ALMOST MEDIEVAL CARVING ADORNS A BEAUTIFUL OLD DOOR IN SÜRMENE

Sürmene, as a result, became a place of both exceptional architectural interest and social disorder. On several occasions the provincial government forcibly relocated the town, destroying shops and warehouses in an effort to wrest control from local strongmen.

Competition among local elites had a direct bearing on architecture. In the eighteenth century large mansions (*konaks*) took the form of fortified buildings with reception rooms for meeting supplicants, followers and allies. They also served as places of government, sometimes incorporating a jail, a tax and census office, an accounting room and perhaps some kind of hospital. By the 1830s the provincial government had destroyed the older fortified hilltop residences, but the coastal districts remained ungovernable without the assistance of the local elites, who now re-emerged as officially appointed, supervised



THE EMBLEMS ON THIS FIREPLACE IN SÜRMENE'S HAŞIM AĞA KONAK REMAIN A MYSTERY

representatives. They began to build new mansions, usually in the lowlands near the coast, which, while still serving as sites of local government, no longer took the form of strongholds.

The homes of ordinary villagers were also affected. For the local elites, the site and style of their residences had became both a political tool and a manifestation of status, and they were naturally keen to prevent ordinary villagers from building large houses at strategic points. But as the elites began to submit to central government and lost their fortified residences, ordinary villagers were at last able to construct larger houses where they pleased.

Economic circumstances also played their part. Since at least the Middle Ages, the villagers of the district of Sürmene have produced goods and artefacts for overland and overseas markets. But these markets have always been in a state of flux. Products such as butter and cheese, wool and hides, beans, flax, hazelnuts, hemp, maize and squash, and activities such as boat-building, anchovy-fishing, cloth-dyeing and arms manufacture – all demanded a variety of storerooms and workplaces, either next to or within domestic residences. House design changed as the importance of these various activities waxed and waned. Since the 1930s, for example, the whole region of Rize, from Sürmene to Arhavi, has become famous for tea production, which in many places has replaced maize as the staple crop. As a result, old granaries on stilts (*seranders*) are no longer needed, and many have been destroyed.

Labour migration had an effect, too. The villagers of the Sürmene district have always had contact with the world beyond their seemingly isolated hamlets. For centuries they left their mountain fastnesses to seek their fortunes as soldiers, preachers, tradesmen, craftsmen and labourers in the towns of the Ottoman Empire. Some travelled to Istanbul, Erzurum, Konya or Bursa, others to Romania, the Crimea or the Caucasus.

In some areas houses came to serve as bases for large groups of people rather than homes for single families, with the result that numerous families might claim shares in a single house. On an earlier visit to the district of Hemşin, east of the town of Rize, I had come across very large houses which are today claimed by a hundred or more absent owners, who live and work in different Turkish cities and return occasionally with their families to the ancestral home for a summer vacation.

Connection with the outside world also introduced new building crafts and fresh ideas about the functions of a house – just as the return of local residents after a period of employment in Germany in the 1960s led to the building of Bavarian-style chalets.

During my tour of the valleys and hilltops of Sürmene, I was shown how houses in the eastern coastal region can be viewed as documents of local history. Each area – Of, Ikizdere, Rize, Pazar, Ardeşen, Hemşin and Artvin – has its own distinctive landscape and climate, its own different position in the imperial system, its own unique relationship to the surrounding sea and land routes. And these houses are not the remainders of an archaic "folk" tradition so much as palimpsests of a local imperial society. The salons, balconies, fireplaces, façades, carvings and paintings that have survived are layers of a bygone life, breathing in an ever-moving present.

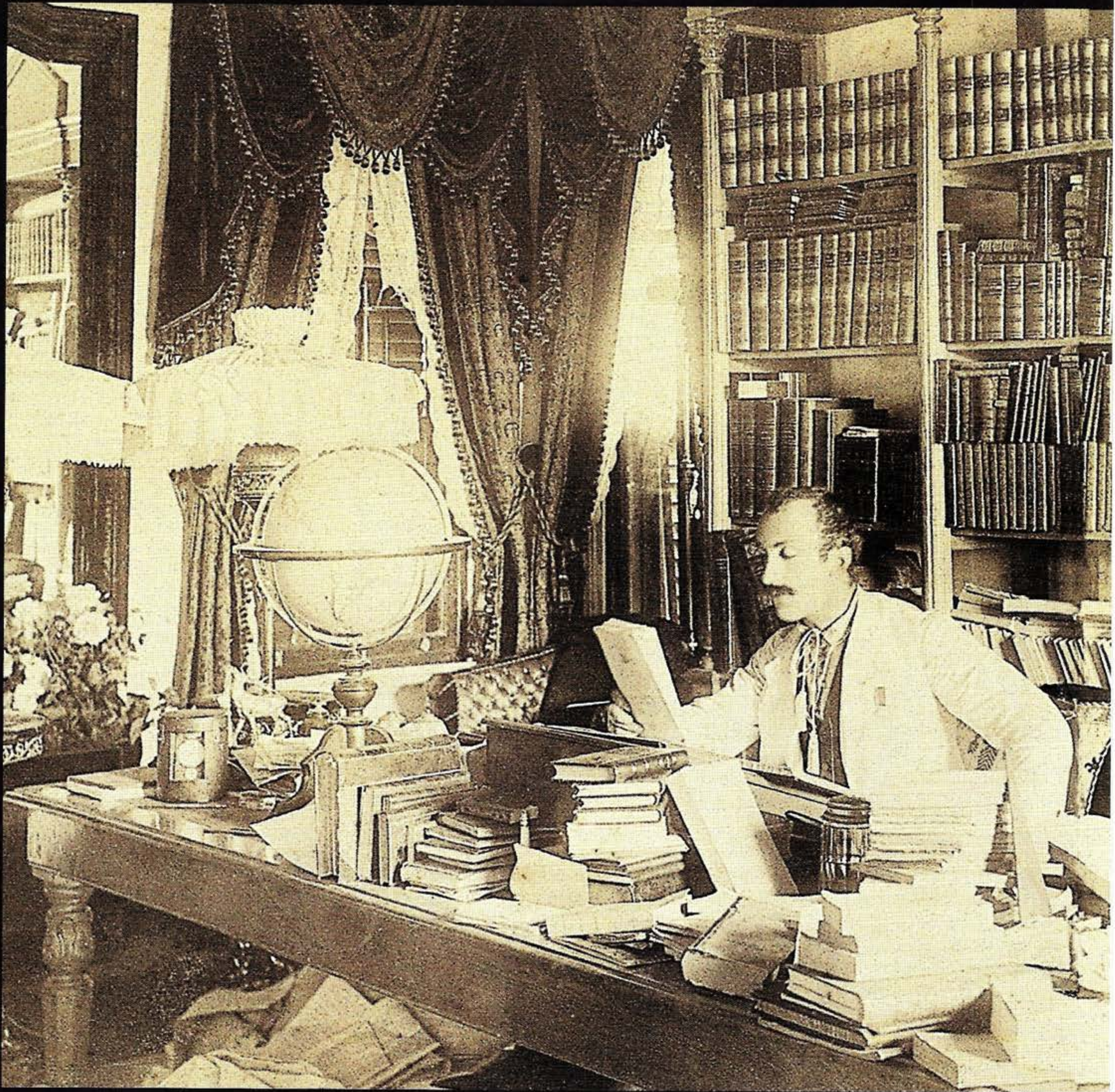
◆

Book Offers

☐ The photographs in this article, by Ali Konyalı, are from *Rural Architecture in the Eastern Black Sea Region / Doğu Karadeniz'de Kırsal Mimari* (Milli Reasurans Art Gallery, Istanbul). Available to CORNUCOPIA subscribers at £45 inc p&p.

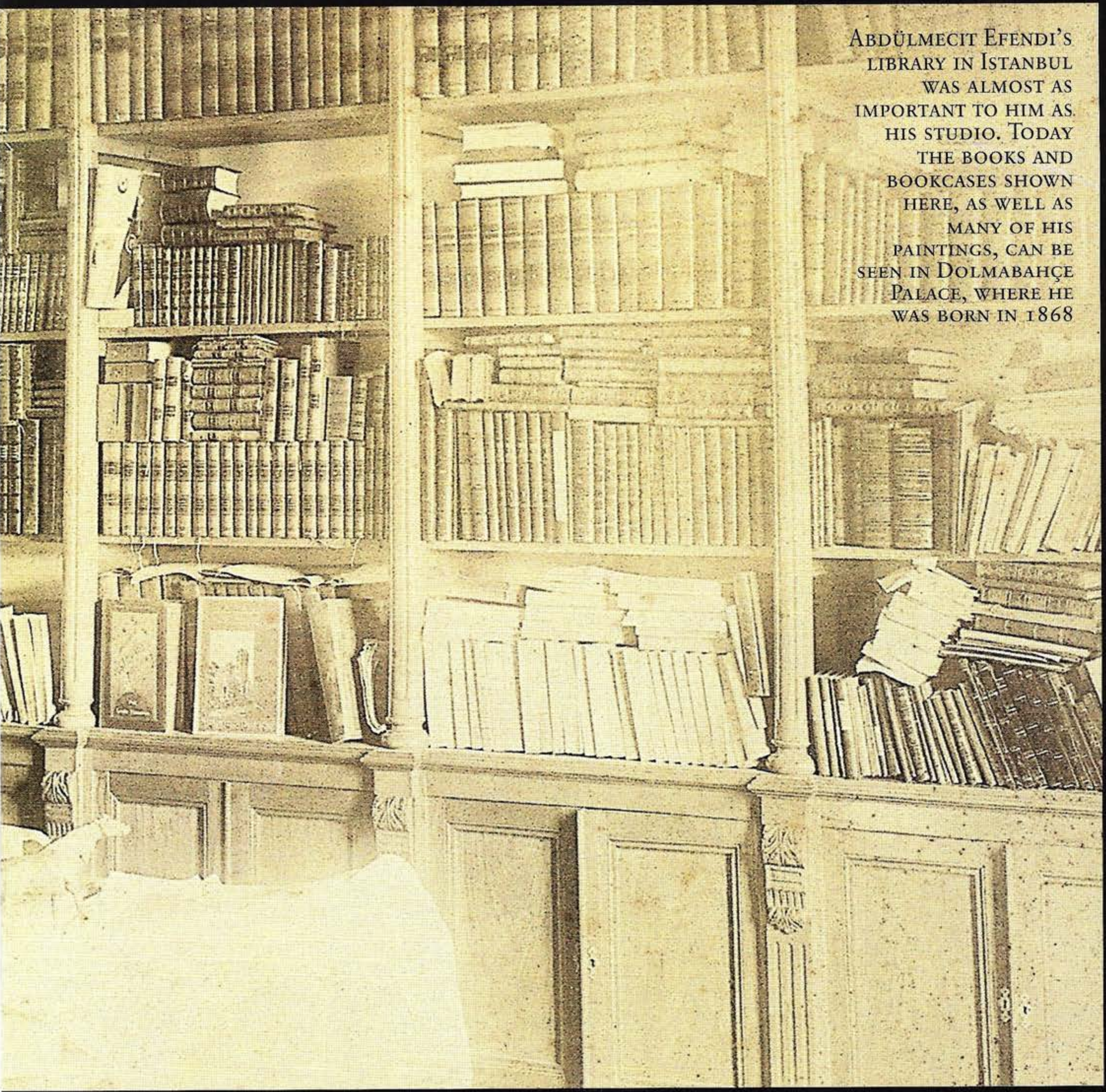
☐ *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity*, by Michael Meeker. Subscriber price £24.95 post-free.

☐ Issues 12 and 28 of CORNUCOPIA are devoted to the Black Sea and are still available for sale. Order online at www.cornucopia.net



PAINTING HIS WAY INTO

The dashing Abdülmecit Efendi, pictured here in his library, was the last member of the Ottoman dynasty to hold court on the Bosphorus. Cultured, enlightened and with a passion for painting, he was cousin of the last Sultan and spent two years as Caliph. But in 1924, the caliphate was abolished and

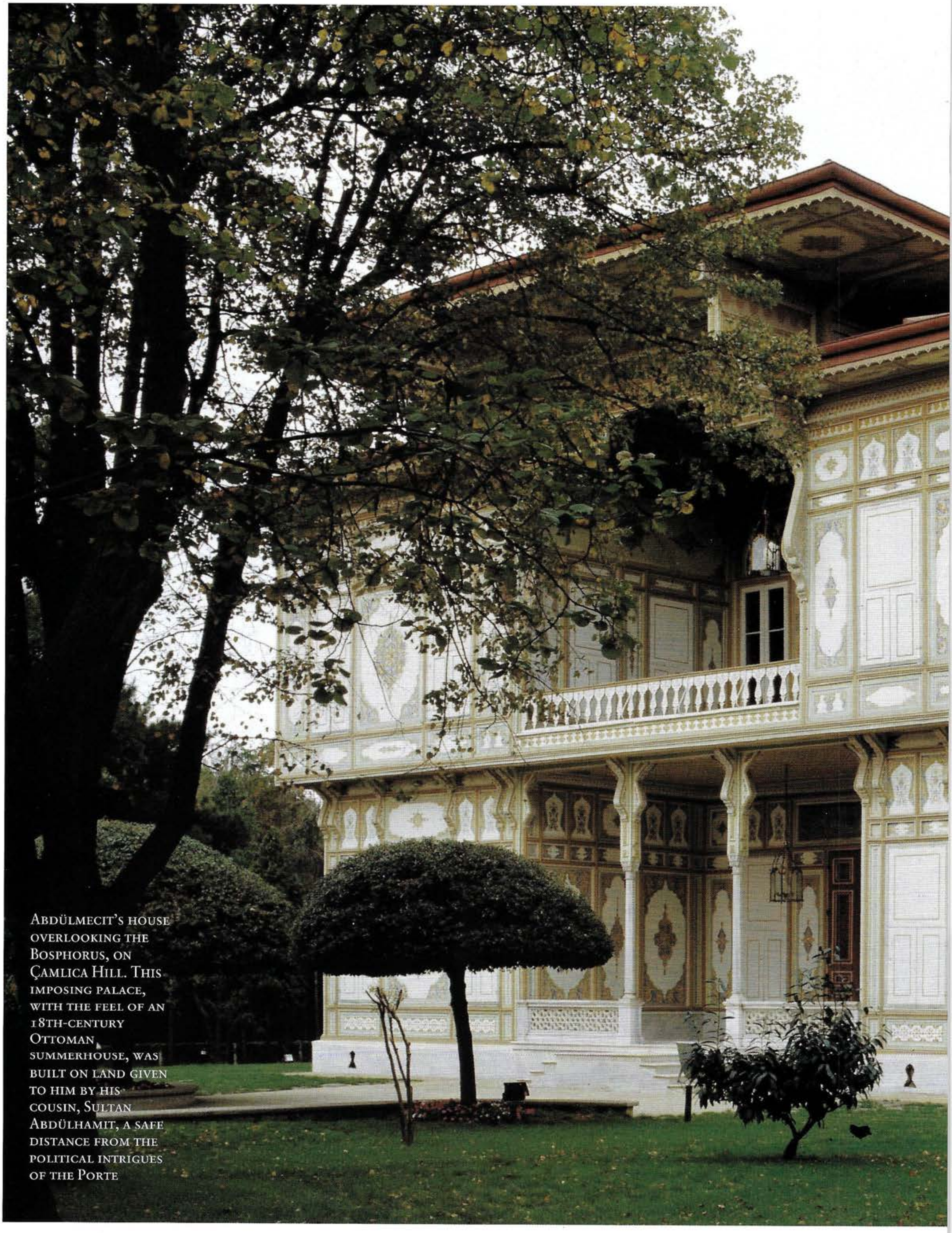


ABDÜLMECIT EFENDI'S LIBRARY IN ISTANBUL WAS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT TO HIM AS HIS STUDIO. TODAY THE BOOKS AND BOOKCASES SHOWN HERE, AS WELL AS MANY OF HIS PAINTINGS, CAN BE SEEN IN DOLMABAHÇE PALACE, WHERE HE WAS BORN IN 1868

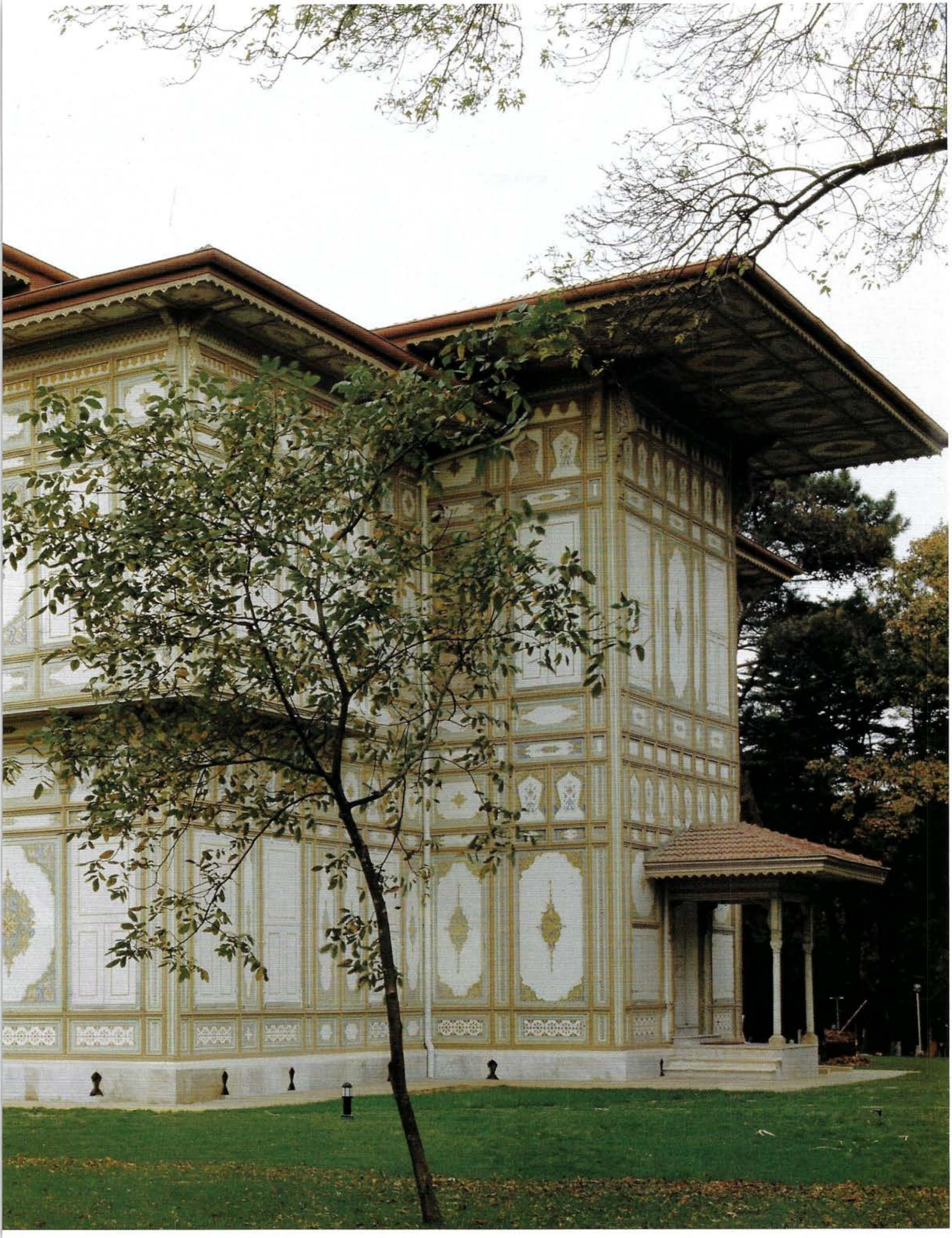
TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION

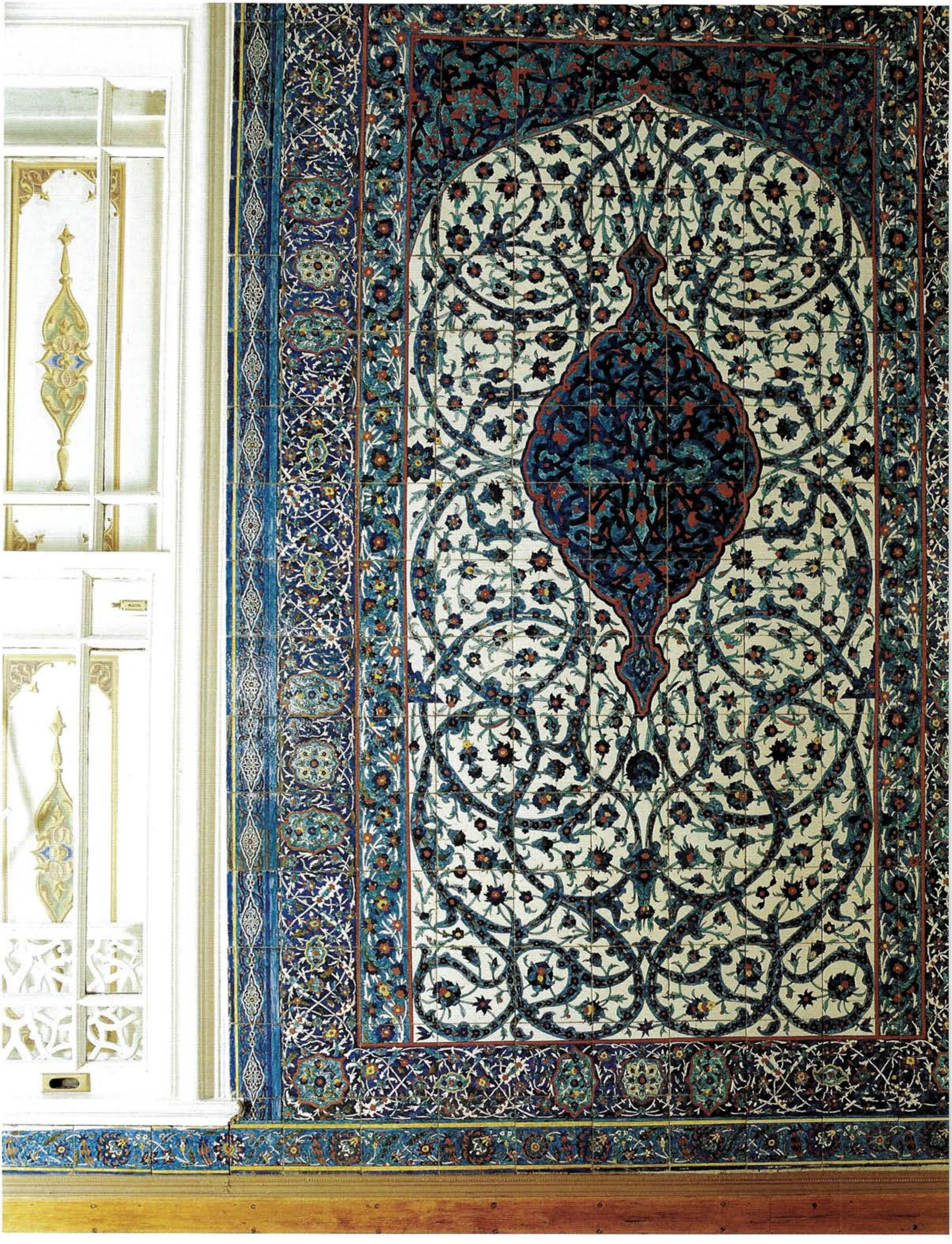
HISTORY

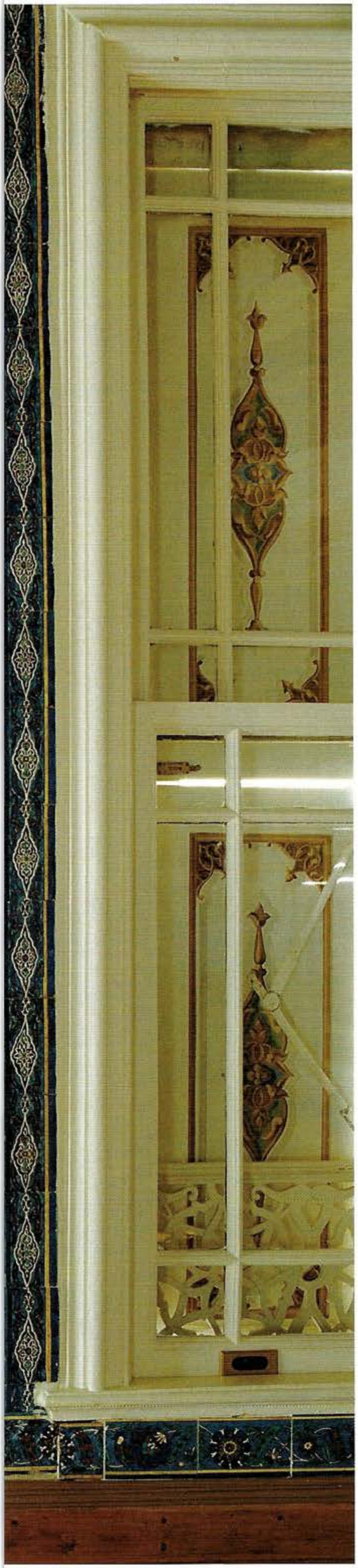
Abdülmecit left the city his family had captured five centuries earlier for exile in France. His paintings, abandoned in the very studio of his house on Çamlıca Hill where he had created them, are a remarkable pictorial legacy of the last days of empire. By Philip Mansel. Photographs overleaf by Fritz von der Schulenburg

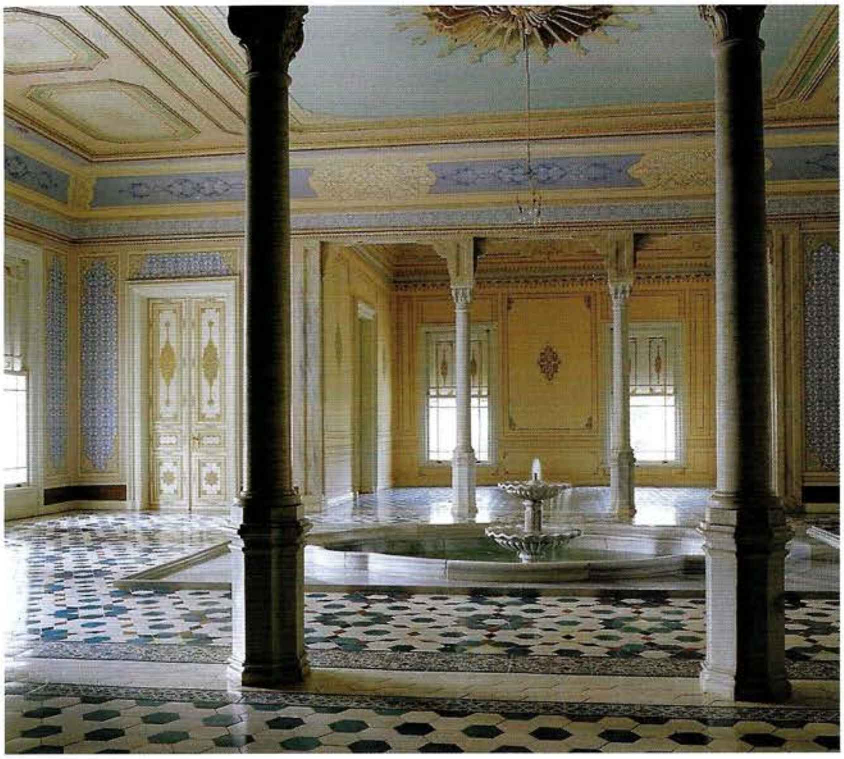


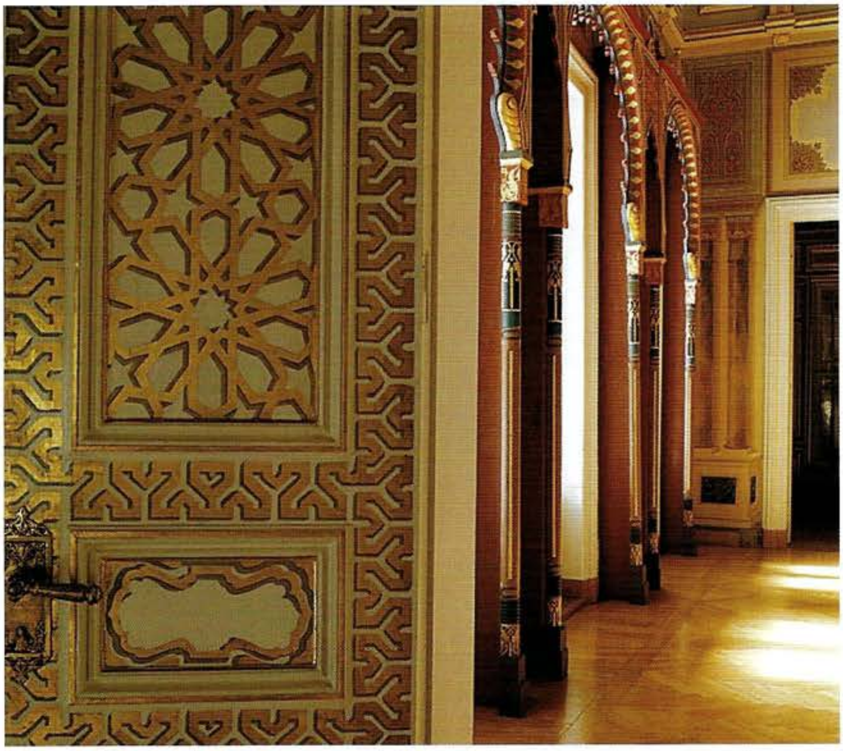
Abdülmecit's house overlooking the Bosphorus, on Çamlica Hill. This imposing palace, with the feel of an 18th-century Ottoman summerhouse, was built on land given to him by his cousin, Sultan Abdülhamit, a safe distance from the political intrigues of the Porte



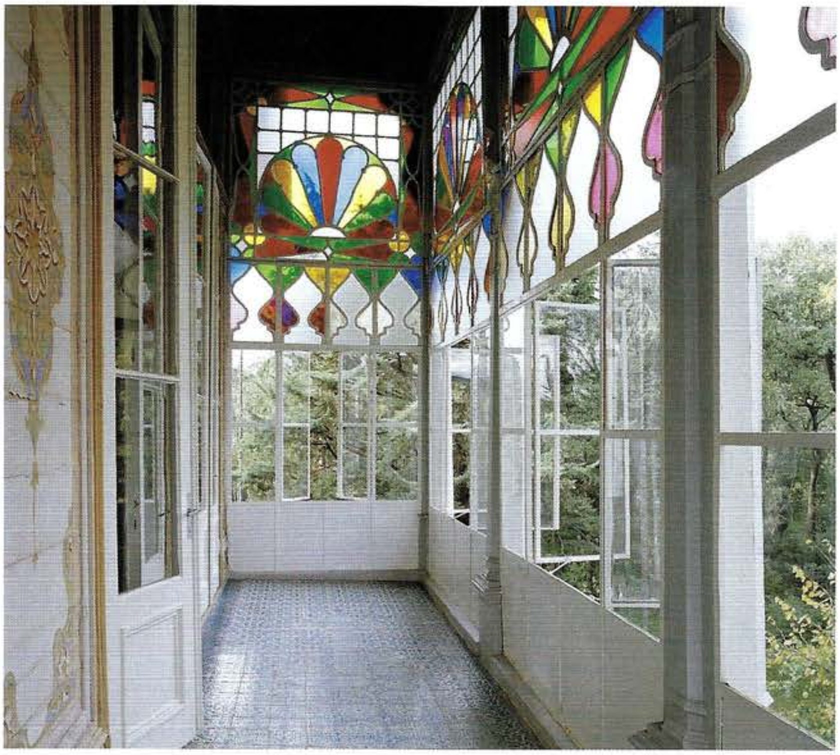


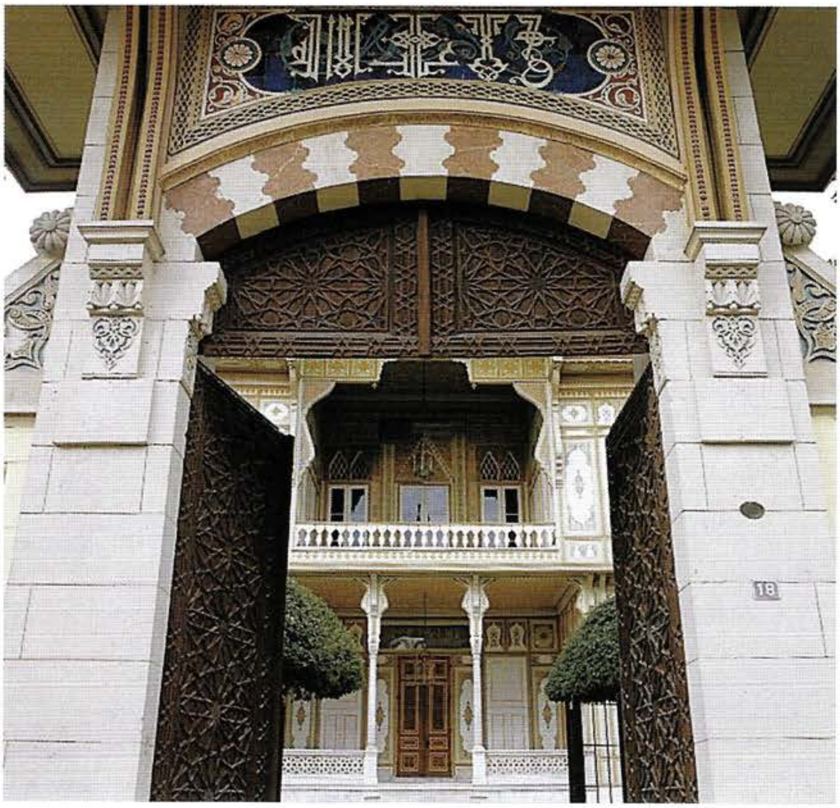


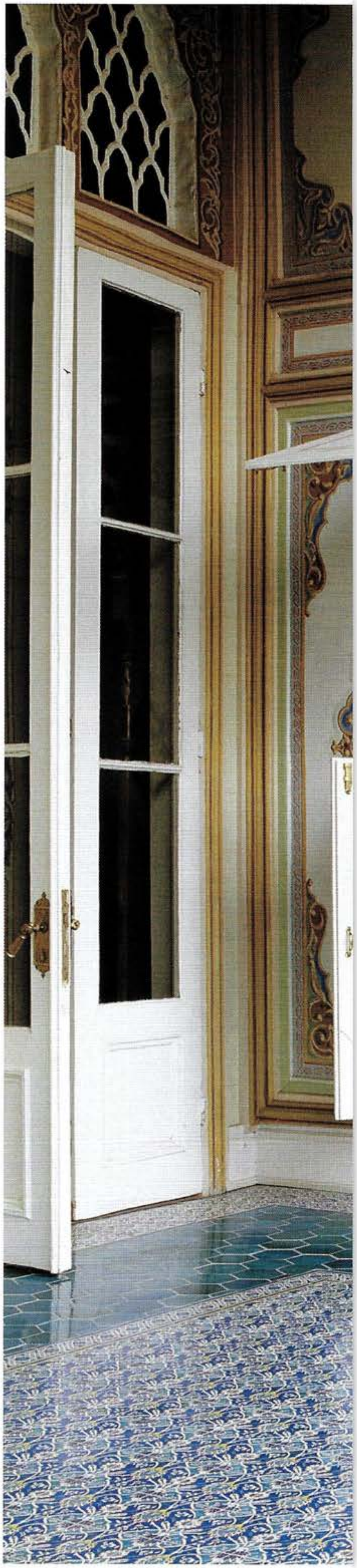




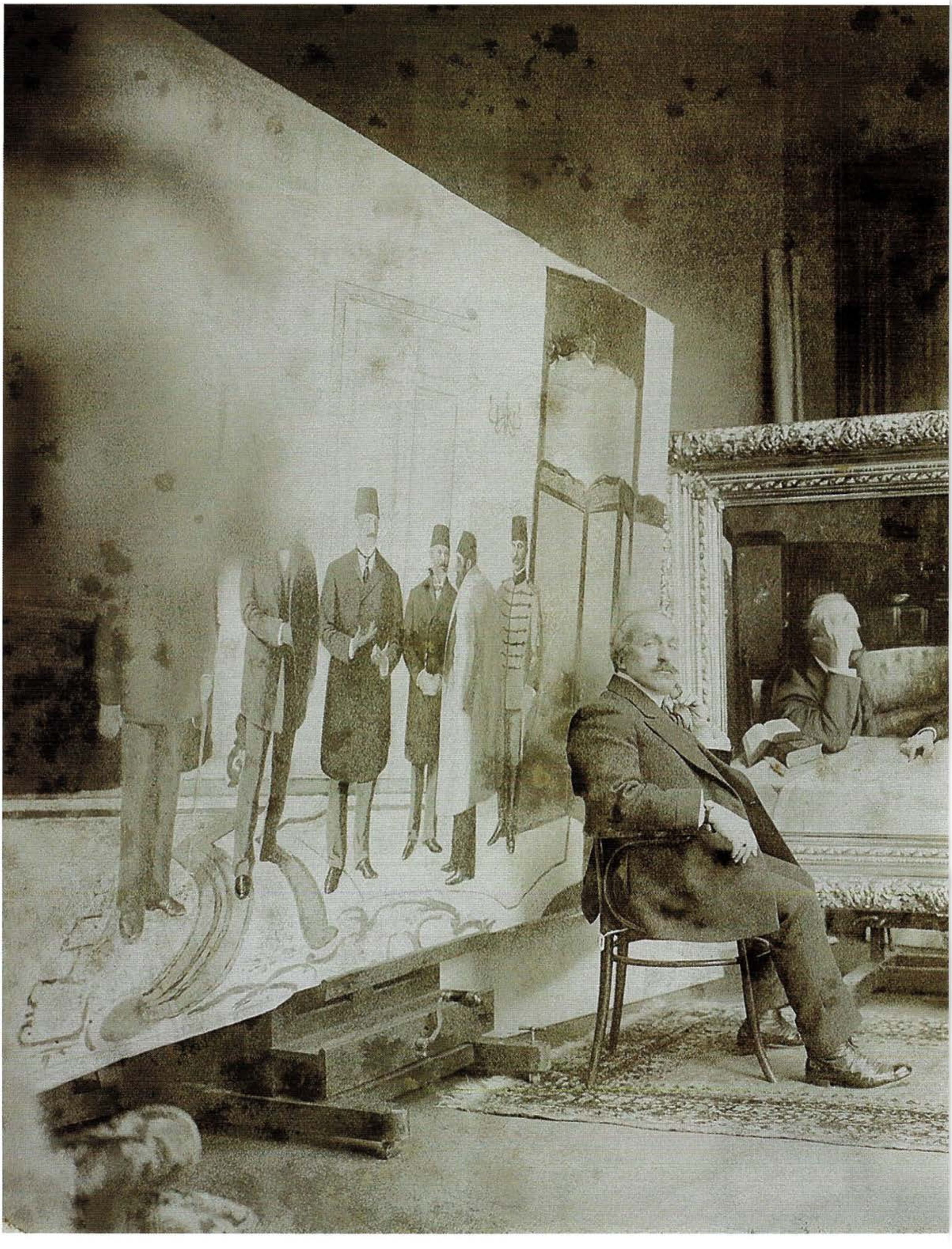
Exuberant essay in Oriental revivalism. Above: Abdülmecit decorated his kiosk with gilded geometric and arabesque murals and Moorish arches that could have been lifted from the pages of Owen Jones's fashionable 'Grammar of Ornament'. Left: elaborate tiles in the manner of 17th-century Iznik panels were supplied by the Kütahya ceramicist Mehmet Emin. Top: the plan devised by the architect, Alexandre Vallaury, who was born in Istanbul and trained in Paris, is classically Ottoman: four spacious rooms, one in each corner of the house, lead off an airy central hallway, where a fountain plays in a marble pool

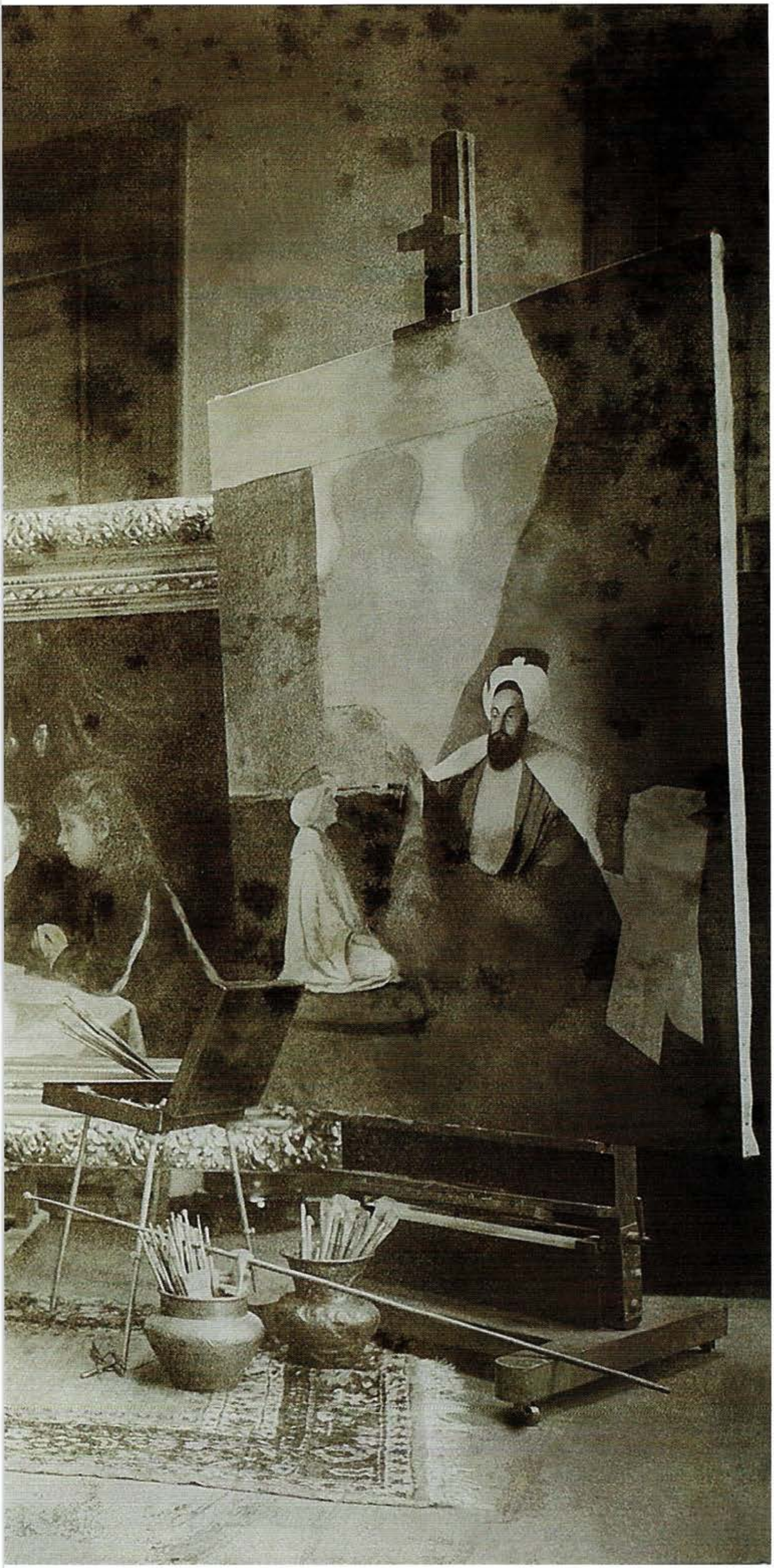






TOP: STAINED GLASS ENCASES A GALLERY OVERLOOKING THE GARDEN WHERE ABDÜLMECIT LOVED TO WALK EVERY MORNING. ABOVE: HE DESIGNED THE GRANDIOSE ARCHED GATE FRAMING THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE. THE KUFIC INSCRIPTION IN ART NOUVEAU STYLE, WHICH READS 'THERE IS NO VICTOR BUT GOD', WAS ALSO HIS DESIGN. RIGHT: UPSTAIRS, VIVID FLOOR TILES RECALL THE MOSQUES OF BURSA. IN WINTER THE HOUSE WAS CLOSED UP LIKE A JEWEL BOX. THE SHUTTERS, TYPICAL OF 18TH-CENTURY YALIS, WERE PAINTED WITH MOTIFS BORROWED FROM UŞAK CARPETS



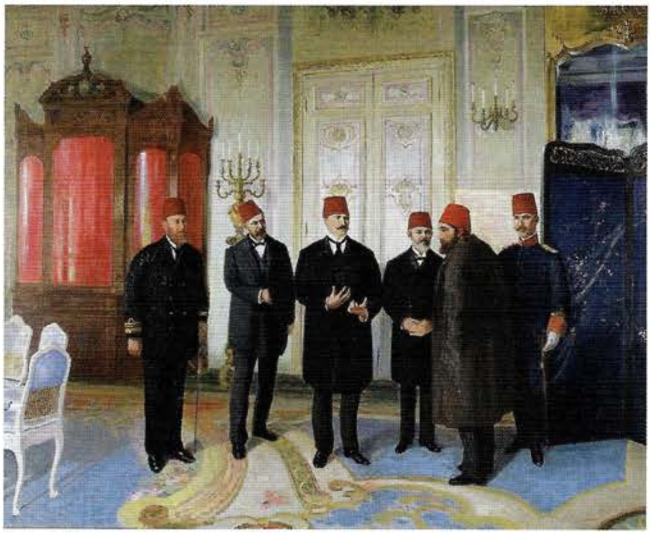


TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION

Private view: at home with the last Caliph

That Istanbul has a full record in pictures of its last years as an imperial capital is thanks to two painters: the Italian court painter Fausto Zonaro and the Caliph Abdülmecit, who, because of the political turmoil of those years, died in exile. The most intelligent and cultivated prince of the Ottoman dynasty, he was a frequent visitor to Zonaro's studio and one of his greatest admirers. They shared many friends, such as the archaeologist and artist Osman Hamdi Bey and the politician and soldier Enver Pasha, and both supported the Young Turk revolution. Born in 1868, a son of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861–1876), and first cousin of Sultan Abdülhamit, Abdülmecit had received an education in both traditional Ottoman and modern French cultures at the princes' school in Yıldız Palace. In 1895, on the death of the previous owner, the ex-Khedive Ismail of Egypt, Sultan Abdülhamit bought for his first cousin Abdülmecit an estate below the isolated, wooded Çamlıca Hill, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. It was, by

Abdülmecit in his studio. He painted historical scenes with a strong political message. 'The Deposition of Abdülhamit II', left, celebrated his cousin's fall. The four deputies depicted actually sat for him. In 'The History Lesson' (centre), shown at the Paris salon, he is seen with his children poring over a map of the ever-shrinking empire. To the right are his reforming ancestors, Selim III and the future Mahmut II intention, far from Istanbul and Yıldız, and there the kiosk that bears Abdülmecit's name was constructed.



Photographie
Phébus

Above: a youthful Abdülmecit in a frock coat. Top: in the completed 'Deposition of Abdülhamit II', he recorded in punctilious detail the room in Yildiz Palace where the event took place. Opposite: an atmospheric still life of a smoking cigarette and a cup of coffee with a filigree holder, or 'zarf'

The kiosk's architecture and decoration mirror the cosmopolitan character of Istanbul. The architect, Alexandre Vallaury – born in Istanbul in 1850, the son of an Italian baker – had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He subsequently became the most fashionable architect in Istanbul and taught generations of Turkish architects at the Academy of Fine Arts, founded in 1883.

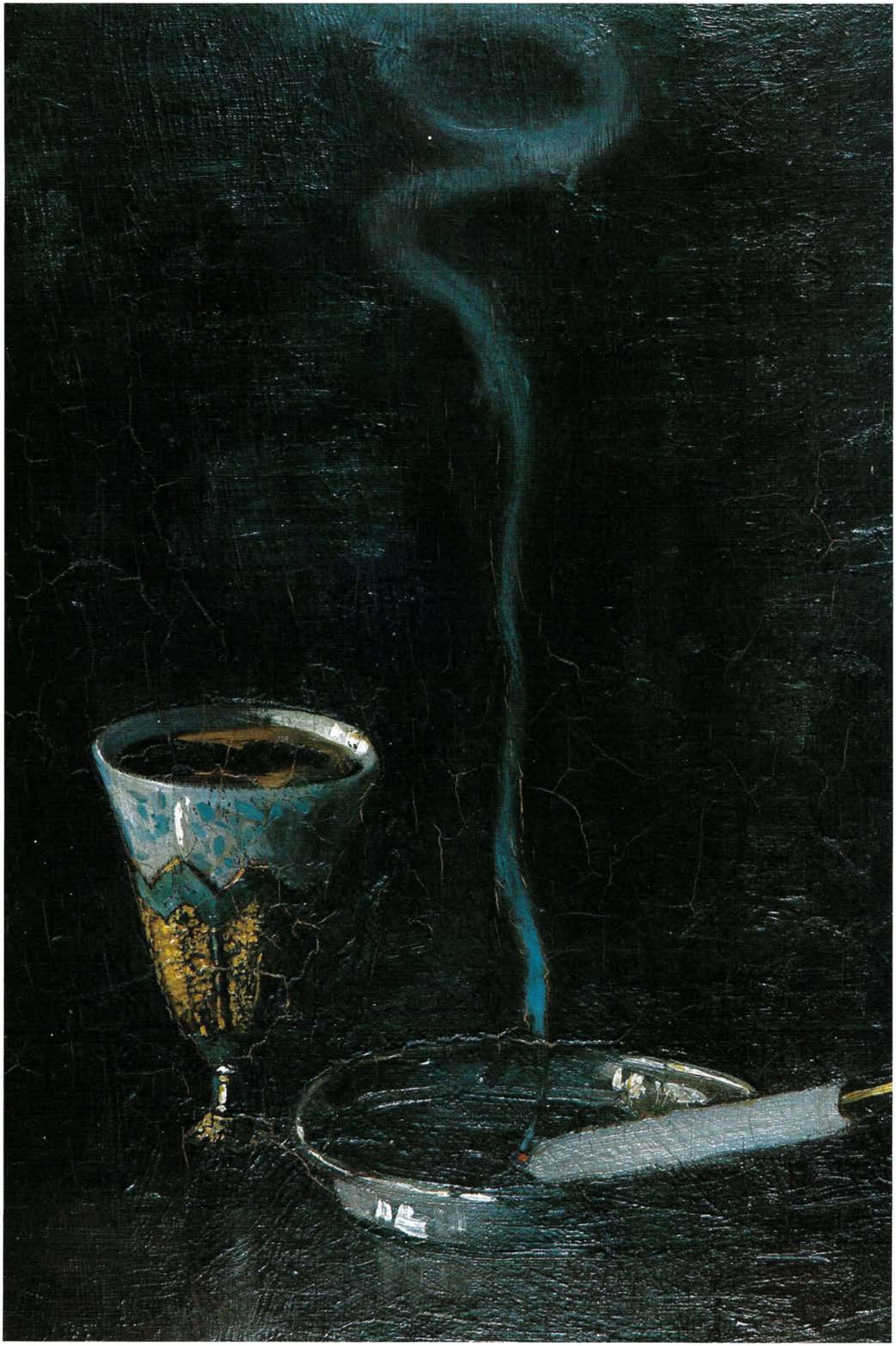
The kiosk is an imposing two-storey wooden structure, built in the shape of a cross and resting on a stone basement. It is a nineteenth-century reinterpretation of traditional Ottoman designs and motifs. Its external decoration of neo-Ottoman and neo-Moorish polychrome painted panels of flowers and arabesques gives it an unusual and colourful appearance. The decoration was repeated on the inside, with neo-Mameluke arches and columns and brightly coloured Ottoman tiles on the walls. The tiles are from the workshop of Mehmet Emin, who pioneered the revival of the manufacture of traditional Turkish tiles at Kütahya – a sign of a growing pride in Turkish culture in the late Ottoman Empire.

The interior was a sumptuous blend of East and West. Modern chairs, sculpture and a grand piano were placed alongside neo-Islamic inlaid furniture, a Koran stand and an arabesque-style chandelier designed by Abdülmecit himself. In the garden, in accordance with Ottoman tradition, there was a separate building where the family and the women of the household slept. This, along with other auxiliary buildings, has now disappeared. The family used to walk through the park, gardens and orchard to spend the day in the kiosk. The grounds were surrounded by a high wall. The imposing principal gate, designed by Abdülmecit, bears the inscription "There is no victor but God".

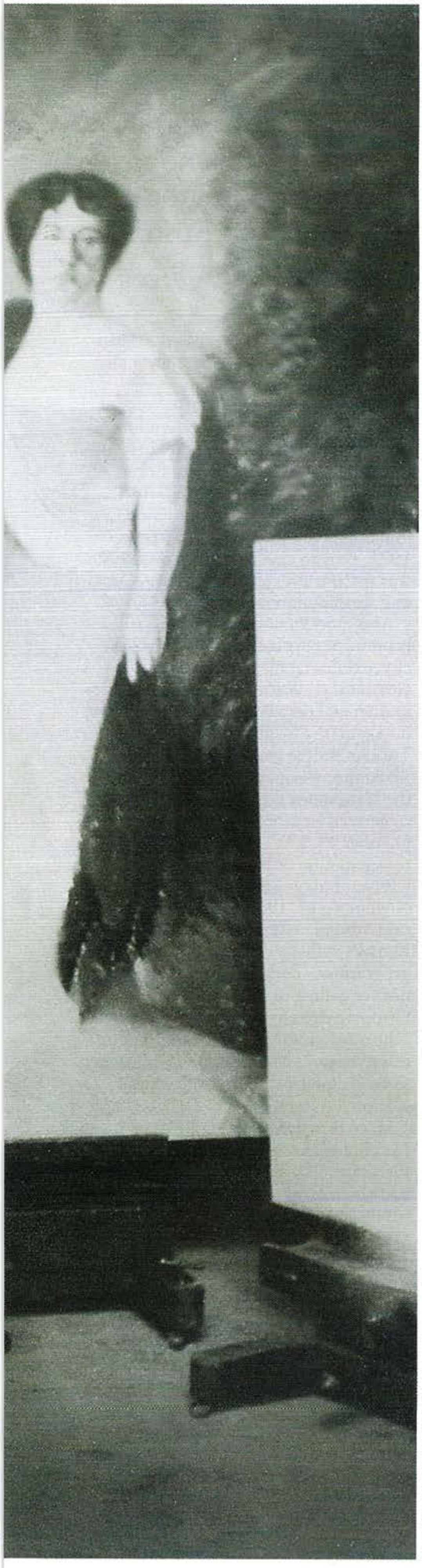
Abdülmecit's kiosk was, however, almost as much of a prison as princes' apartments had in the past been in Topkapı. His cousin, Abdülhamit, autocratic and suspicious, forbade him to visit Istanbul. In his years of enforced leisure Abdülmecit wrote poetry, practised calligraphy, read the works of Victor Hugo and cultivated his garden. He boasted that the goldfish in his pools could recognise the sound of his voice when he came to feed them. At once cosmopolitan and patriotic, he learnt to speak French and German almost as well as Ottoman Turkish and Persian.

He also became a good musician, playing the piano, violin and cello, often with his wife, and composing both classical Western music (like many Ottoman princes and princesses) and Turkish music. In her introduction to the recent work on Abdülmecit Efendi, Günsel Renda writes: "His music library was of rarely surpassed scope, containing a vast collection of written music and books of both Western and Turkish musical theory, and demonstrates the full extent of his musical culture. Regrettably most of his own compositions are now lost."

Painting was another favourite occupation. He had a studio in his kiosk and took lessons from a favourite of Abdülhamit, the director of Imperial museums and Ottoman orientalist Osman Hamdi Bey. An admirer of both the Western paintings and the Ottoman calligraphy panels hanging in Ottoman palaces, he was able to paint in both styles. Surviving works include pictures of *zeybeks*, the village guards who protected the mountain passes on the Aegean; a palace coffee server; Sultans Selim I, Murat IV, Selim III and Mahmut II; and his own father, Abdülaziz, on a white horse. Though



TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE)



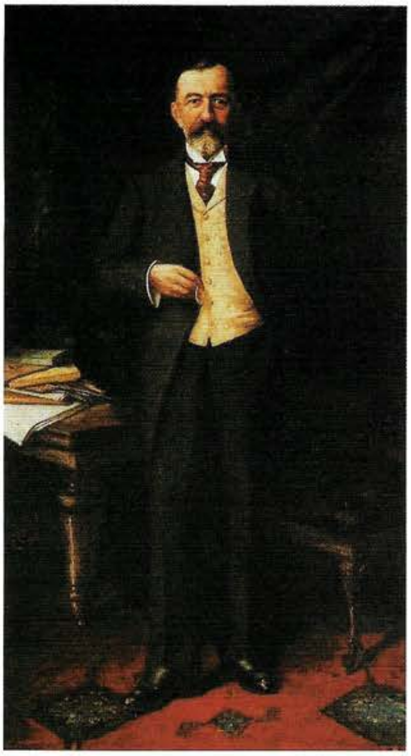
TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION

Abdülmecit was not a professional painter – in some pictures the hands are mere lumps – he none the less painted with vigour. Moreover, his pictures are historical documents, reflecting the educated elite's interest in both Turkish and French cultures.

In politics Abdülmecit sympathised with the Young Turk enemies of his cousin Abdülhamit. One of his most famous pictures, in a style like that of the Parisian Symbolists, was entitled *The Fog*. This political picture was an attack on Abdülhamit, inspired by a poem of the same name by Tevfik Fikret, comparing Istanbul under Abdülhamit to a senile sorceress, shrouded in a fog of hypocrisy, jealousy, greed and dishonour. No longer the "queen of the world", it had become the "whore of the world". Inscriptions on tiles in the kiosk also have a critical tone: "The leader of the tribe is he who serves the tribe"; "He who is learned has the highest rank"; and, prophetically, "The powerful do not know that their palaces are sometimes destined to be a sparrows' nesting place."

After Abdülhamit was deposed in April 1909, Abdülmecit was so overjoyed that he executed a painting depicting the moment when, in Yıldız Palace, four deputies of the Ottoman parliament informed the Sultan of his deposition. To give the picture authenticity, the deputies in question (an Albanian, a Jew, an Armenian and a Laz) were summoned to sit for him in his studio. The only picture of a monarch's deposition painted by a member of his dynasty, *The Deposition of Sultan Abdülhamit II* illustrates the proverb "Revenge is a dish best eaten cold", and reflects the bitterness of power struggles within the Ottoman dynasty between traditionalists and modernisers, supporters of absolute or constitutional monarchy.

Enjoying a period of relative freedom following the Young Turk revolution, Abdülmecit frequently crossed the Bosphorus to Istanbul, exhibiting at the salons of the Society of Ottoman Painters, founded in 1908, of which he was the energetic honorary president. He visited mosques, attended concerts, became a patron of Turkish charities, poets and painters. Concerts of Ottoman music and performances of modern Turkish plays, attended by writers and intellectuals from the city, were held in



The kiosk on Çamlica Hill virtually became an academy. Left: Abdülmecit Efendi, smartly besuited even at work in his studio, is photographed in 1917, painting Abdülhak Hâmit, one of the many writers who frequented the house's elegant drawing rooms. The portrait, above, now hangs in the Bebek house of the late poet Tevfik Fikret, another admired contemporary

> Paintings of princes and princesses playing Beethoven and of a harem lady reading Goethe were intended to affirm the Ottoman Empire's fatal alliance with Germany and Austria as well as the palace's embrace of Western culture

his kiosk. The prince painted portraits of famous writers of the period, including Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem (1911) and Abdülhak Hâmit (1917). His portrait of Selim III instructing Shehzade Mahmud (1912–14) is a tribute to two great reforming sultans of the past. *The History Lesson* of 1912, showing his adored son and daughter, Ömer Faruk and Dürrüşehvar, looking at a map of the provinces lost to Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Greece by the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan wars of 1912–13, reflects the patriotic resentment – which Abdülmecit shared with other Turks – at defeat and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from the lost provinces. Far from the Ottoman dynasty being incompatible with modern Turkish nationalism, one of the most prominent Ottoman princes was one of Turkish nationalism's most vigorous patrons.

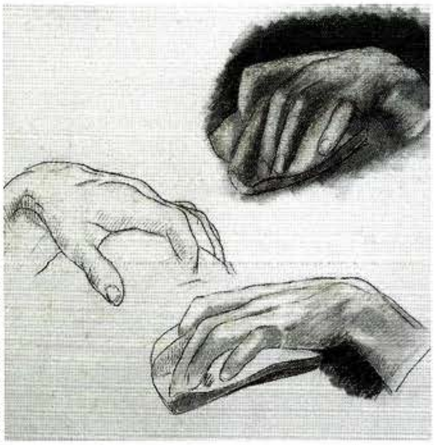
In October 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Germany and Austria. Abdülmecit was disillusioned with the Young Turk leaders, led by Enver Pasha, who had dragged the country into the war, against the wishes of the Sultan, the ministers and the population. However, Abdülmecit was first and foremost a patriot. Paintings of Ottoman princes and princesses playing Beethoven in the palace, watched by himself (1915) and of a harem lady reading Goethe (1917) were intended to affirm the Ottoman Empire's fatal alliance with Germany and Austria as well as the palace's embrace of Western culture. They were shown at an Ottoman exhibition in Vienna in 1918. However, in November 1918 the German, Austrian and Ottoman empires were forced to sign armistices with the allies. That same month British, French, Italian and Greek forces occupied Istanbul.

The pro-allied policy of the new Sultan, the prince's cousin Mehmet VI, aroused Abdülmecit's disgust. In June 1919 he was reported by British and other sources to be "at the head of the Nationalist party". His evening visits to the mosques of the capital alarmed the Sultan. On June 12, 1919 he wrote to the Sultan, with unusual prescience, saying: "The ministry reduces the whole Ottoman people to utter despair at a time when the Islamic world regards maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as most necessary from the point of view of Islamism." He feared "the gravest eventualities" for the imperial house and called the Sultan "the ruin of the country, the Caliphate and the Sultanate". He called for immediate elections and the formation of an all-party government including Nationalists.

Both in 1919 and in 1920 he and his son, Ömer Faruk, were the only princes who considered going to Anatolia to join the Nationalist movement of Mustafa Kemal, whose forces, in the summer of 1920, approached the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. Again demonstrating the close link between the Ottoman dynasty and Turkish nationalism, Mustafa Kemal frequently corresponded with Abdülmecit, and in the summer of 1920 expressed a desire for Ömer Faruk to join the Nationalist forces. No doubt to prevent Abdülmecit's departure, in September 1920 the Sultan placed him temporarily under house arrest in Dolmabahçe, on the European side of the Bosphorus. In early October he was released. And when Ömer Faruk went to Anatolia to join the Nationalist forces in April 1921, though cheered by the people, he was no longer useful to Mustafa Kemal and was not allowed to join the army.

Abdülmecit continued to play a prominent part in the public life of the city, exhibiting his pictures at Galatasaray, visiting the cultural centres known as Turkish Hearths and showing his sympathy for the sufferings of the Turkish people by fasting once a week. Abdülmecit sent an ADC to welcome the Nationalist general Refet when he re-entered Istanbul in triumph on October 19, 1922. After the Turkish re-occupation of Istanbul, Mehmet VI left Istanbul on a British battleship on November 17, 1922. Even after his catastrophic reign, and under Mustafa Kemal's ruthless modernising programme, Turkish Nationalists were not yet willing or able to break with the Ottoman dynasty. On November 19, as "the most moral, learned and pious of this dynasty", Abdülmecit was chosen to be Caliph by the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

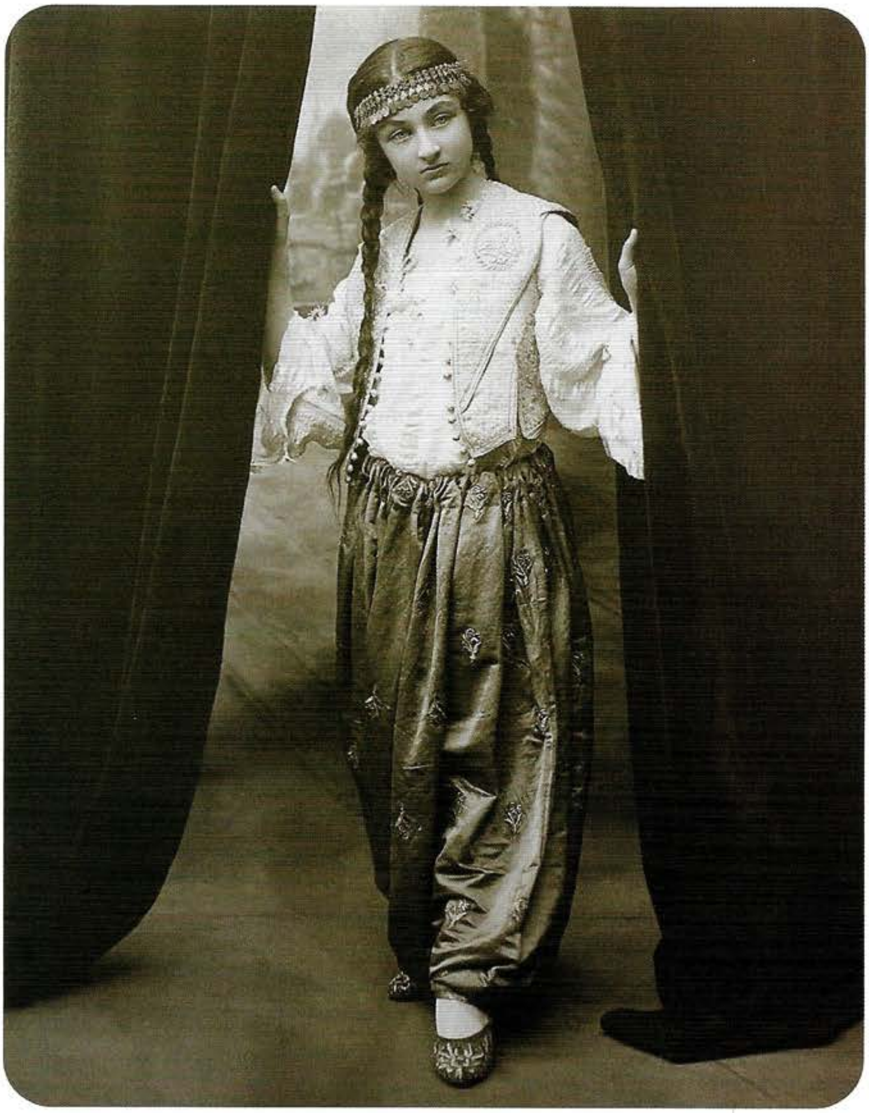
Since British forces remained in Istanbul at the same time as Turkish forces until October 1923, reports from British diplomats and intelligence sources can be a corrective to the version of events presented by official Turkish history and admiring modern biographers of Atatürk. At first, according to British intelligence reports, Abdülmecit was reluctant to accept the title of Caliph, correctly stating that it was reserved for "the most powerful monarch in Islam"; he did not want to be "a mere phantom". He yielded when the Refet promised that the sultanate would eventually be restored, and hinted at "consequences of a



TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION

Abdülmecit's work, though sometimes naive, is academically sound. His best sketches are evocative impressions of Istanbul during the last years of empire. All were left behind in 1924 when he departed for exile, never to return. The charcoal sketch of hands, left, is now in Dolmabahçe Palace regrettable nature" if he refused. In effect he was blackmailed into the position, because Mustafa Kemal still needed an Ottoman figurehead. A believer in parliamentary government, Abdülmecit was in some ways more modern, and certainly more familiar with European culture, than Mustafa Kemal. Both favoured modernisation. The difference was that Abdülmecit went to mosque every Friday and Kemal did not.

On November 29, 1922 the new Caliph received the homage of *ulema* (clergy), deputies and senior officials, in Topkapı Palace. Any ceremony that implied political sovereignty or military authority was dropped from his inauguration. To confirm that he was not Sultan, he wore white tie and tails rather than military uniform, and received homage standing in front of, rather than sitting on, the golden throne of the Ottomans. He did not receive the traditional Ottoman inauguration rite of being "girded with the sword of Osman" at Eyüp. However, as His Imperial Majesty the Caliph Abdülmecit II, he drove from Topkapı to the mosque of Fatih in a state carriage, with Refet beside him, escorted by horseguards and followed by a procession of cars and carriages. As film of the event shows, there was steady hand-clapping from crowds lining the route, many of whom climbed trees and onto roofs for a better view. The city seemed to have turned scarlet with Turkish flags. In the mosque, thanks were offered for the preservation of the Turkish people from extinction, and for the first time prayers were in Turkish, not Arabic.



TGNA NATIONAL PALACES COLLECTION

DÜRRÜŞEHVAR, ABDÜLMECIT'S BELOVED DAUGHTER, WHO MARRIED PRINCE BERAR, HEIR TO THE NIZAM OF HYDERABAD, AFTER HER FAMILY WENT INTO EXILE IN 1924

After victory in one holy war, there was a call for another: against ignorance and in favour of commerce and agriculture. On the return journey, in accordance with tradition, the Caliph offered prayers at the mausoleums of Mehmet II, Selim I and Mahmut II.

Still calling himself Servant of the Two Holy Places, he continued to attend the different mosques of Istanbul in state every Friday, sometimes arriving by *kayık*, sometimes riding a white horse called Konya presented to him by Refet. Years later Irfan Orga remembered: "Medjid would dazzle my eyes when he attended at Beyezıt for prayers. I would watch him enthralled, the band would play loudly and the soldiers march and the Sultan [sic] Medjid would bow from his coach, first to this side he would bow then to that, and the cheers would hoarsely rend the air. The old Sultan [sic] would stretch his lips into a wider smile of acknowledgement, putting his hand gracefully to his scarlet fez." Mustafa Kemal later complained of the pomp of the *selamlık* processions; he himself had arranged for the Caliph to play this ceremonial role, and his government paid the Caliph's household.

Although it added to the surface glitter of the city, the caliphate was doomed from the start. Mustafa Kemal wanted no rival as a Turkish father figure, and was determined to de-Islamicise the state. As early as January 1923 he told a group of journalists that he planned to abolish the caliphate – once they had, on his instructions, "prepared" opinion. On February 27 the British ambassador had an audience with the Caliph in Dolmabahçe. He noted: "The officials as a whole presented a down-at-heel appearance which was a marked contrast to that of the court officials in the ex-Sultan's time." He called Abdülmecit "an intelligent and versatile man deeply interested in politics". He was, however, "a mere puppet whose acts are carefully watched by the national government... the shabby ceremonial of which he is the centre cannot fail to impress the observer somewhat painfully".

The Caliph carried on painting: landscapes, portraits of Refet, Ömer Faruk and Dürrüşehvar, and a remarkable self-portrait showing the beard he had grown on becoming

Caliph. His expression suggests awareness of his imminent deposition.

Istanbul was still a centre of opposition to Mustafa Kemal. In the autumn of 1923 many Istanbul newspapers, implicitly criticising Kemal, wrote articles in favour of the caliphate. The difference was between democracy and despotism, they said, not between republic and monarchy. On November 11 *Tanın* wrote that the loss of the caliphate would be totally incompatible with "reason, loyalty and wellbeing". Speaking in the name of the Muslims of India, who had contributed much money to the Turkish national struggle, the Aga Khan and Ameer Ali expressed concern for the future of the caliphate – thereby giving Kemal a pretext for denouncing it as a source of foreign interference.

On October 2, 1923 the last of the allied occupying forces left Istanbul; on the 13th Ankara was proclaimed capital of the Turkish state; on the 23rd Refet, the only Nationalist who had paid court to the Caliph, was deprived of military command of Istanbul. And on October 29 Turkey became a republic, with Kemal as President. Abdülmecit sent Kemal his congratulations.

Nevertheless, in the winter of 1923–4 the Caliph's budget was cut and he was deprived of his state *kayık* and guard. The last Ottoman *selamlık* procession took place on February 29, 1924 at the mosque outside Dolmabahçe Palace, near the spot where Mehmet VI had embarked for life in exile on November 17, 1922.

On March 3, 1924 the Grand National Assembly in Ankara abolished the caliphate. Dolmabahçe was surrounded by troops. Abdülmecit was reading the Koran (by some accounts the essays of Montaigne) late at night when Adnan Adıvar (husband of the great Turkish writer Halide Edib and Ankara's chief representative in the capital) and the prefect of police came to tell him he must leave at dawn.

Contrary to the official version of events, the abolition of the caliphate was far from popular. Ismet Inönü wrote in his memoirs: "We encountered the greatest resistance when we abolished the caliphate." According to the British acting high commissioner, Ronald Lindsay, there was "much disquiet in men's minds: the general attitude in Constantinople and so far as I know elsewhere is one of outward indifference or subdued resignation, bred of lassitude and fear of a triumphant minority". The Caliph took Ömer Faruk, his daughter-in-law Sabiha, their daughter Neslişah, his daughter Dürrüşehvar, two wives, two servants, three officials and seventeen suitcases. Fearful that his popularity might lead to demonstrations in his favour, the government obliged the Caliph to leave from outside the city. The suddenness of the departure explains why the Caliph's drawings, photographs and music scores, his archive and library, remain to this day in Dolmabahçe Palace.

> The Caliph took Ömer Faruk, his daughter-in-law Sabiha, their daughter Neslişah, his daughter Dürrüşehvar, two wives, two servants, three officials and seventeen suitcases. The sudden departure explains why his drawings, photographs and music scores, his archive and library, remain to this day in Dolmabahçe

At 5.30 am, having bidden farewell to a small crowd at the palace gate, they were taken in three cars, followed by a lorry-load of luggage, along the Bosphorus, over Galata bridge, past the Beyazıt mosque, out through the Edirne gate, and then on to Çatalca. At 11 am, sad, tired and hungry, the party arrived at Çatalca railway station. The Caliph tried to smile when the police and gendarmerie gave him his last salute.

The Orient Express arrived at midnight. As the party began to board, watched by the other passengers, the governor of Istanbul gave the Caliph an envelope containing passports valid for leaving Turkey, visas for Switzerland and £2,000 sterling. As the train sped through the Balkans, past the site in Hungary where the heart of Süleyman the Magnificent is believed to be buried, the Caliph lamented: "My ancestor came with a horse and flags. Now I come as an exile."

The last Ottoman Caliph never saw his country again. As a prince he had called France his "second fatherland"; it now became his home. He lived in a villa in Nice, continuing to paint, attend concerts and wear the fez. His verdict on Kemal's reforms was: "It is not constitutions which shape souls but souls which shape constitutions. Suddenly to make a clean sweep is blindness." The same month that the caliphate was abolished, religious courts and schools were closed down.

In 1931 he saw his daughter and a cousin married to sons of one of the many Indian admirers of the caliphate, the Nizam of Hyderabad. Like many Muslims, especially Indians but also Kurds and Arabs, Abdülmecit never accepted the abolition of the caliphate. In 1942 he wrote to congratulate the Emperor of Japan on his victories and on "the re-establishment of the sovereign rights of my disciples the Sultans of Johore and Malacca". He died at the age of seventy-six on August 23, 1944 in Paris, as German soldiers were leaving the city.

◆

Philip Mansel is the author of *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire 1453–1924* (Penguin £9.99), *Sultans in Splendour: Monarchs of the Middle East 1869–1945* (Parkway £12.99), and *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II* (Yale University Press, £19.99). He is currently working on a history of the Levant.

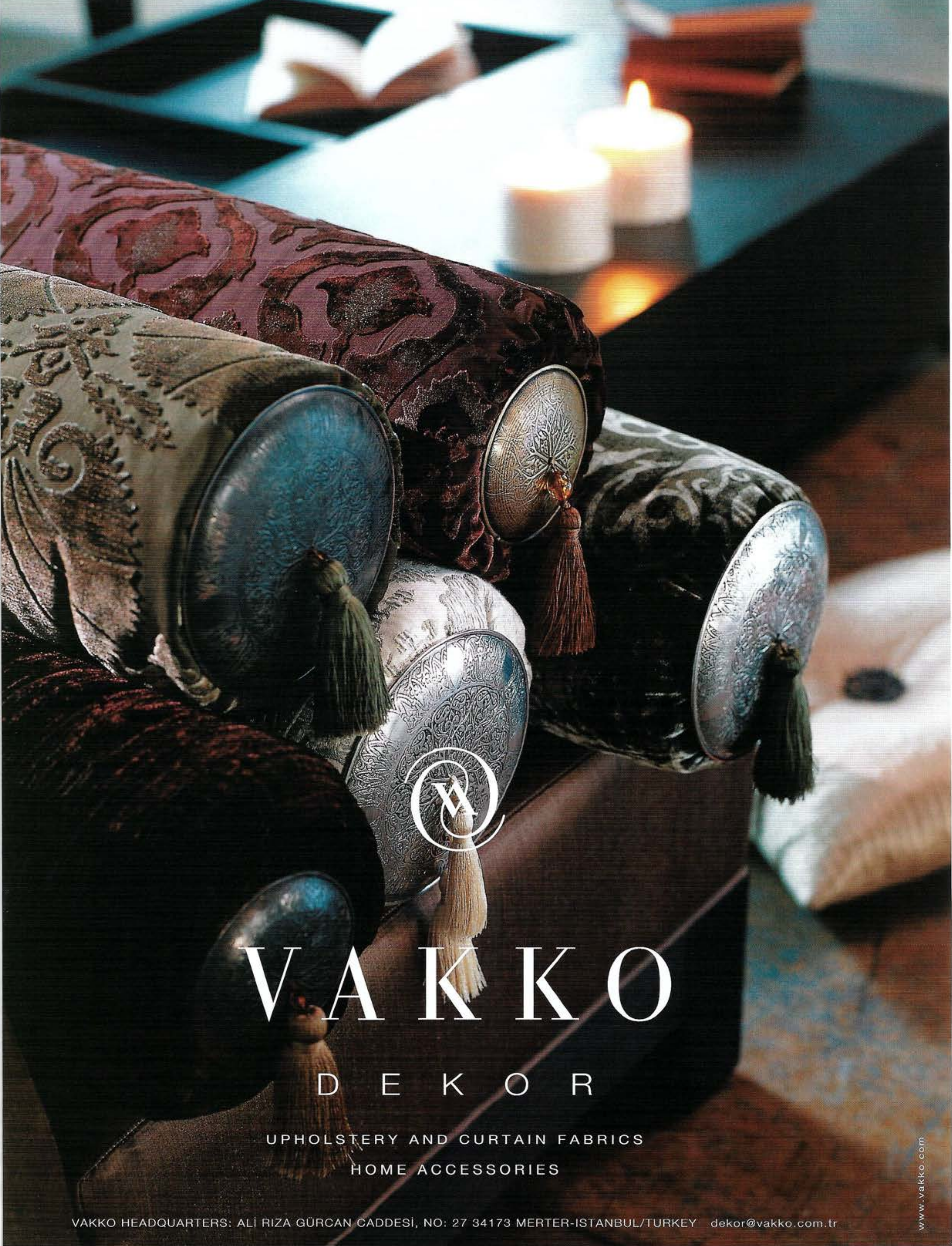
☐ The archive photographs in this article are from *Hanedandan bir ressam: Abdülmecit Efendi* (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, Istanbul 2004, £45), edited by Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, with an introduction in Turkish and English by Günsel Renda and essays in Turkish by Eylem Yağbasan, Emre Aracı and A Sinan Genim.

☐ The description of the *selamlık* procession of Abdülmecit Efendi is from *Portrait of a Turkish Family* by Irfan Orga (Eland, £11.99).

☐ Both the above books are available post-free to subscribers at www.cornucopia.net.

☐ A profile of Abdülmecit Efendi's daughter, Princess Dürrüşehvar, appeared in CORNUCOPIA 31.

☐ Abdülmecit Efendi's kiosk is not open to the public, but his library can be seen in Dolmabahçe (open daily except Monday).



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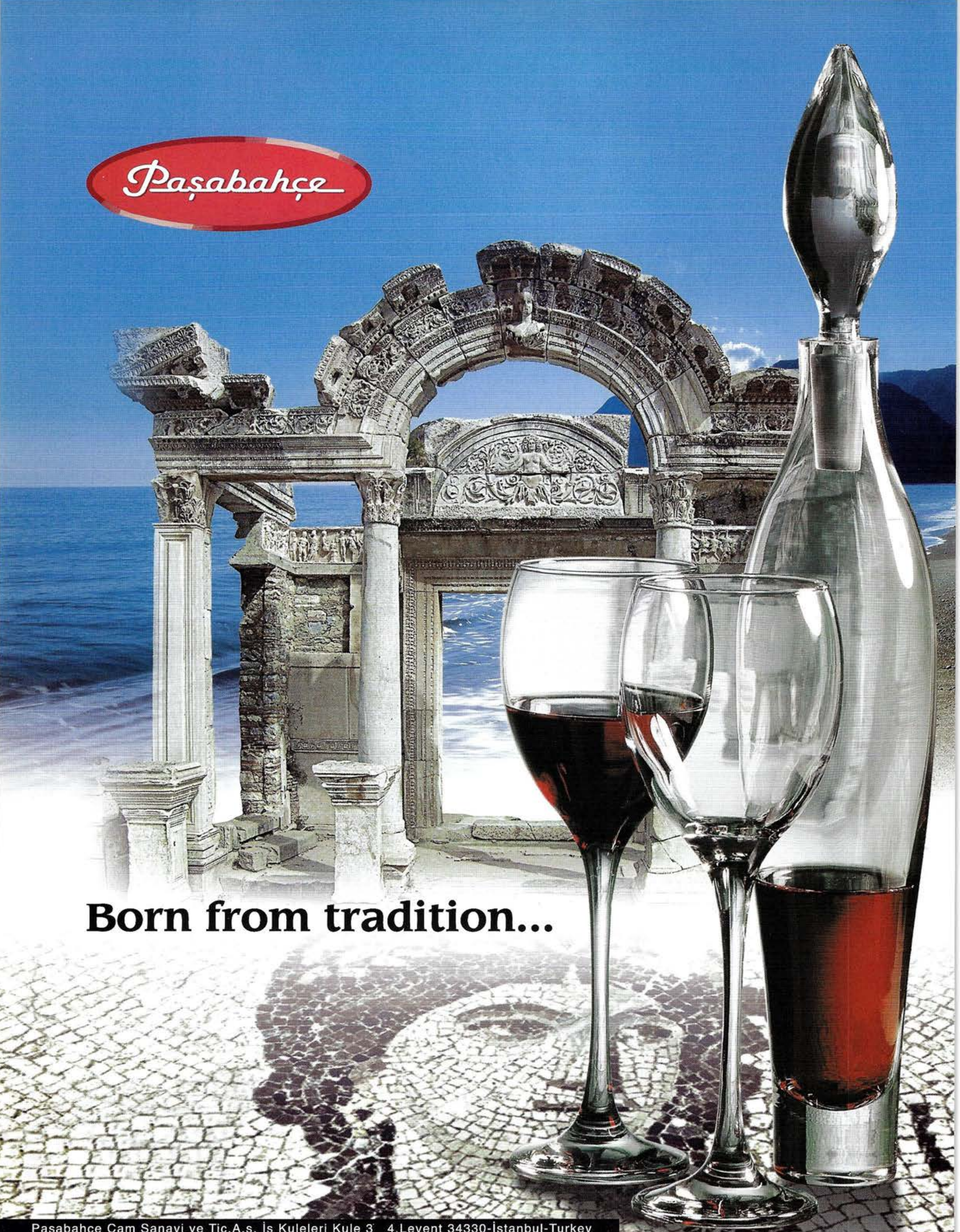
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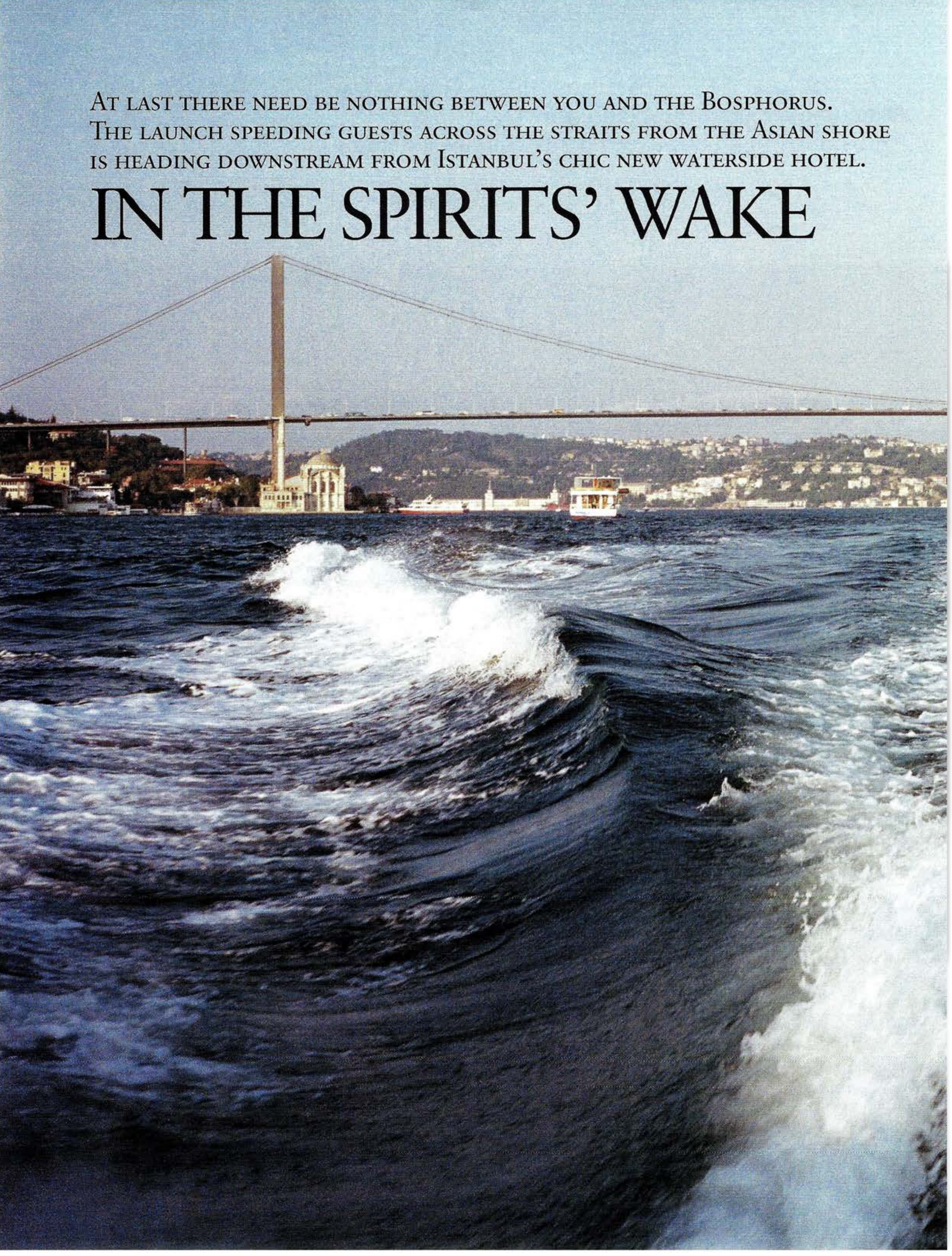
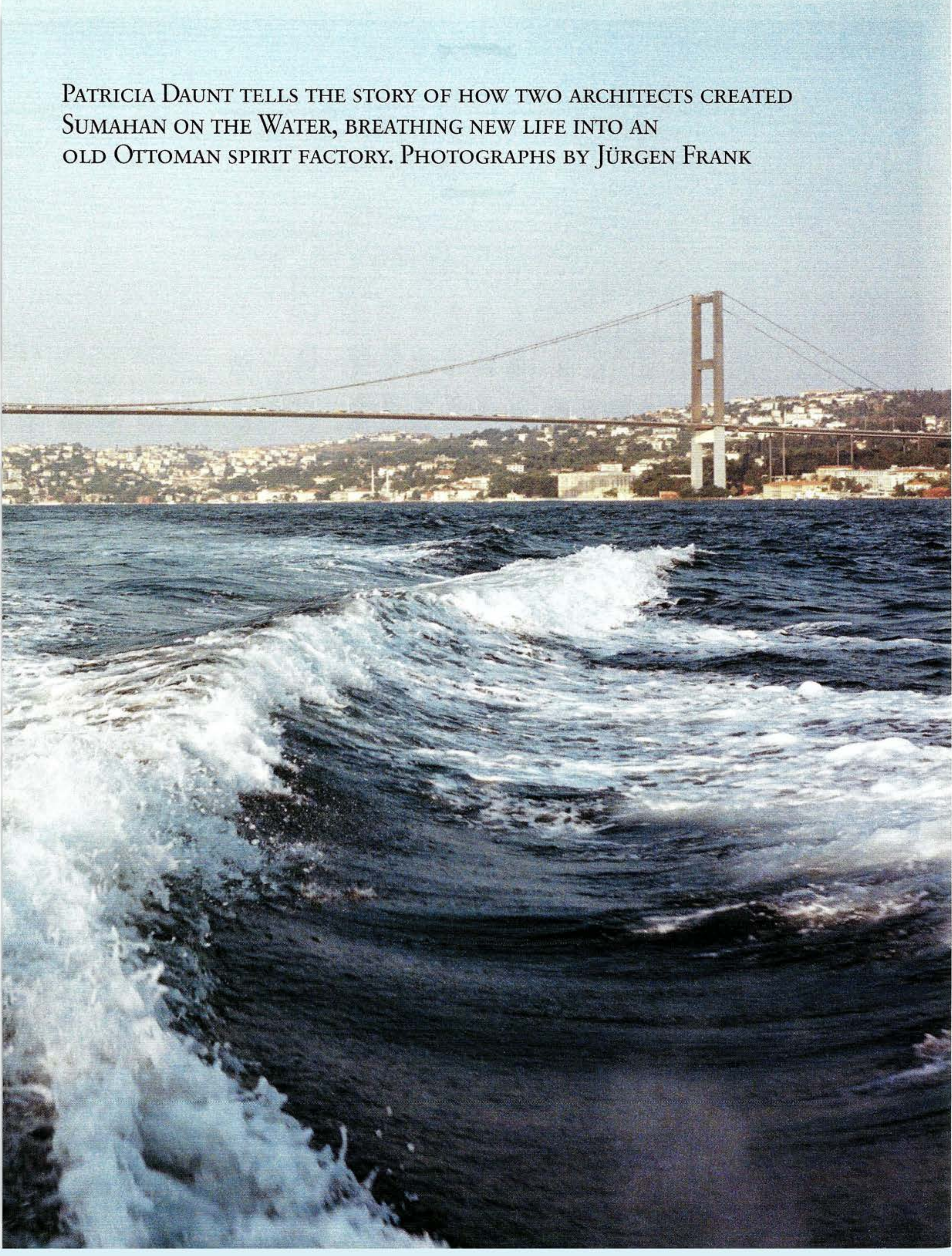
At last there need be nothing between you and the Bosphorus. The launch speeding guests across the straits from the Asian shore is heading downstream from Istanbul's chic new waterside hotel.

IN THE SPIRITS' WAKE



PATRICIA DAUNT TELLS THE STORY OF HOW TWO ARCHITECTS CREATED SUMAHAN ON THE WATER, BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO AN OLD OTTOMAN SPIRIT FACTORY. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JÜRGEN FRANK



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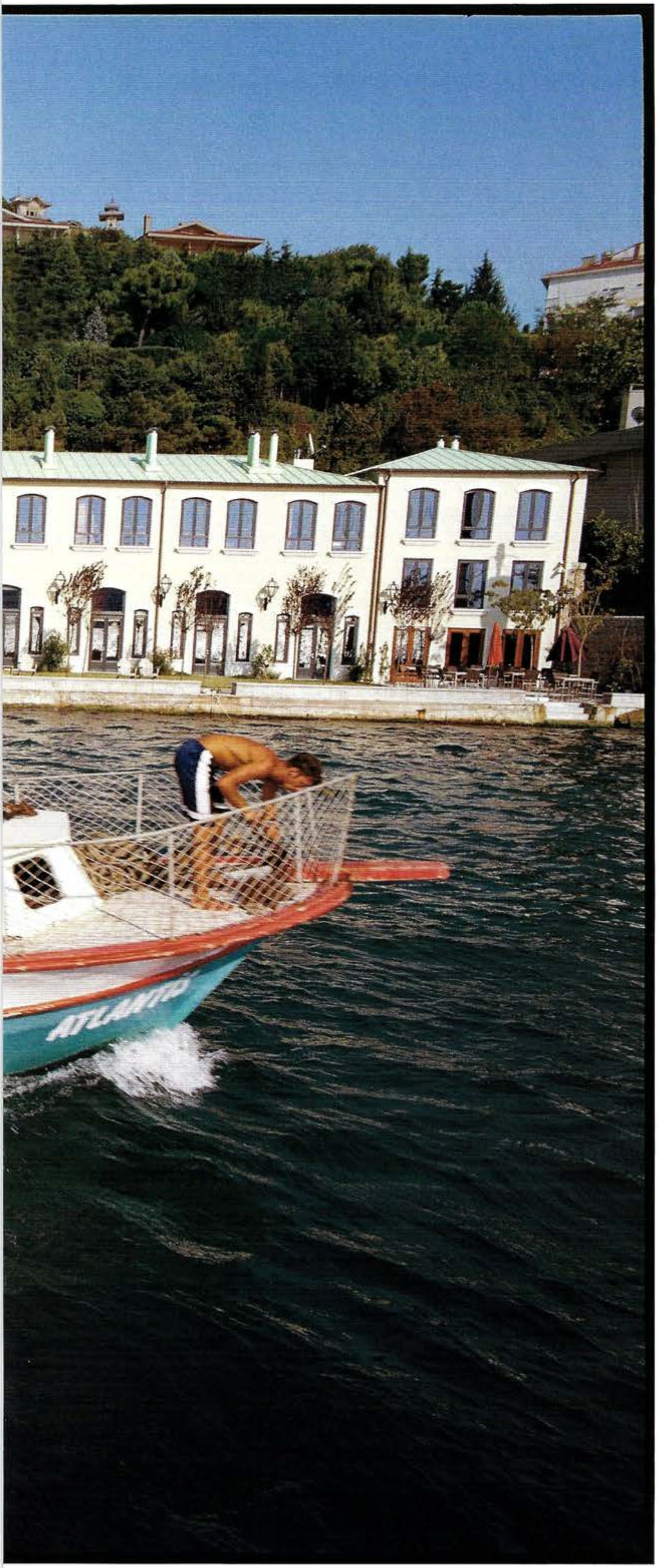
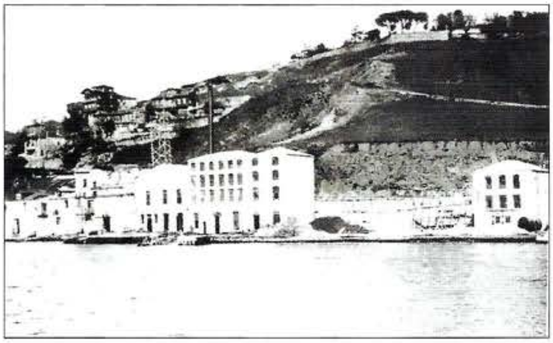


THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DISTILLERY IS THE REALISATION OF A COUPLE'S DREAM, ACHIEVED OVER TWO DECADES OF PAINSTAKING NEGOTIATION



The derelict nineteenth-century Ottoman spirit distillery at Çengelköy has been miraculously transformed from an industrial wasteland on the lower Asian shore of the Bosphorus into a tip-top twenty-first-century hotel, Sumahan on the Water, uniquely standing on its own private quay at the very water's edge.

The Bosphorus, sinuously beautiful riband of deep water dividing Europe from Asia, has over the past twenty years been the victim of unprecedented urbanisation. In contrast to the developments that have sprung up around it, the Sumahan (literally spirit-house) is, like the two bridges halfway between which it stands, both aesthetically and functionally right.

The transformation of the old distillery is the realisation of a couple's dream, achieved over two decades of painstaking negotiation with planning authorities and backers. Fitting perhaps, if small comfort to Nedret and Mark Butler,

LEFT: A FISHING BOAT CHUGS PAST THE SUMAHAN. EVERY GROUND-FLOOR SUITE IN THE HOTEL HAS ACCESS TO THE WATERSIDE TERRACE AND ITS OWN FIREPLACE. THE HOTEL'S COPPER ROOF IS ALMOST LEVEL WITH THE COAST ROAD BEHIND. ON THE LEFT IS THE QUAYSIDE KORDON RESTAURANT, WITH THE OLD FACTORY'S BRICK CHIMNEY IN FRONT OF IT. ABOVE: A 1940S PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE COMPLEX AT ITS LOW POINT AFTER THE REMOVAL OF PART OF THE DISTILLERY. TODAY A NEW WING SEAMLESSLY FILLS THE GAP

'THE HISTORY OF THE SUMAHAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMPLICATED AND ROMANTIC'

the architects whose dream it was, since the history of the Sumahan has always been complicated and romantic.

The original building dates from the reign of Sultan Mahmut II, when royal distilleries were well-constructed factory complexes built in local stone on prime sites. The distillery produced *suma*, or raw spirit, a clear, pungent liquid that can be made from almost any staple, from grain to grape – the Çengelköy factory used figs to distil its *suma*.

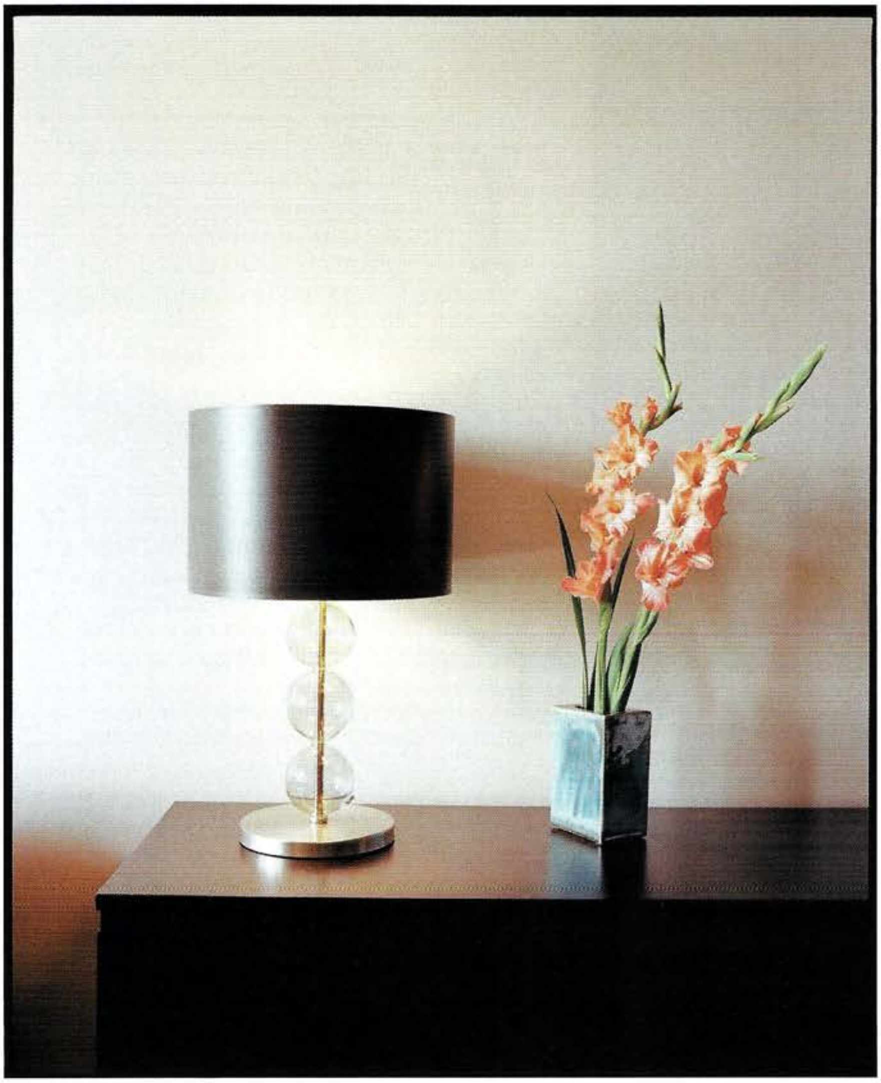
On Mahmut II's demise in 1839 the waterside factory passed to his wife, the beautiful Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan, mother of his two sons and successors, Abdülmecit I and Abdülaziz. She was renowned as a benefactress to the poor and to the women of Istanbul, though her reputation owed nothing to her liberality in dispensing *suma*. She was vehemently teetotal, even destroying the palace's precious collection of crystal drinking vessels. Following her death, ownership of the complex becomes unclear. It has been suggested that the factory was acquired by an Armenian businessman, and there may be truth in the story that an Englishman ran it during the Allied occupation of Istanbul at the end of the First World War. At all events, it continued to produce raw spirit. By 1921 it was evidently making the traditional aniseed-flavoured spirit drunk throughout the Mediterranean region: the smell of rakı issuing from the village's twenty-two taverns was so strong that respectable citizens were obliged to walk down the street to the ferry station with handkerchiefs dipped in cologne held to their noses.

In the early 1930s the distillery changed hands for the last time. The whole complex of buildings either side of the Kuleli coastal road was acquired by Tevfik Cenani, an industrialist who had come from Ottoman Bulgaria and made good. No stranger to Çengelköy, in the mid-1920s, to escape the summer heat of Beyoğlu, he had bought the enchanting two-storey wooden *köşk* previously owned by the Ottoman ambassador to Vienna, Mahmud Nedim Pasha. Set like a jewel on a rise above the village, its interior painted with curious Russian murals, it was the ideal summer house for his unmarried sister, his wife and later their adopted son, the child of a close relative.

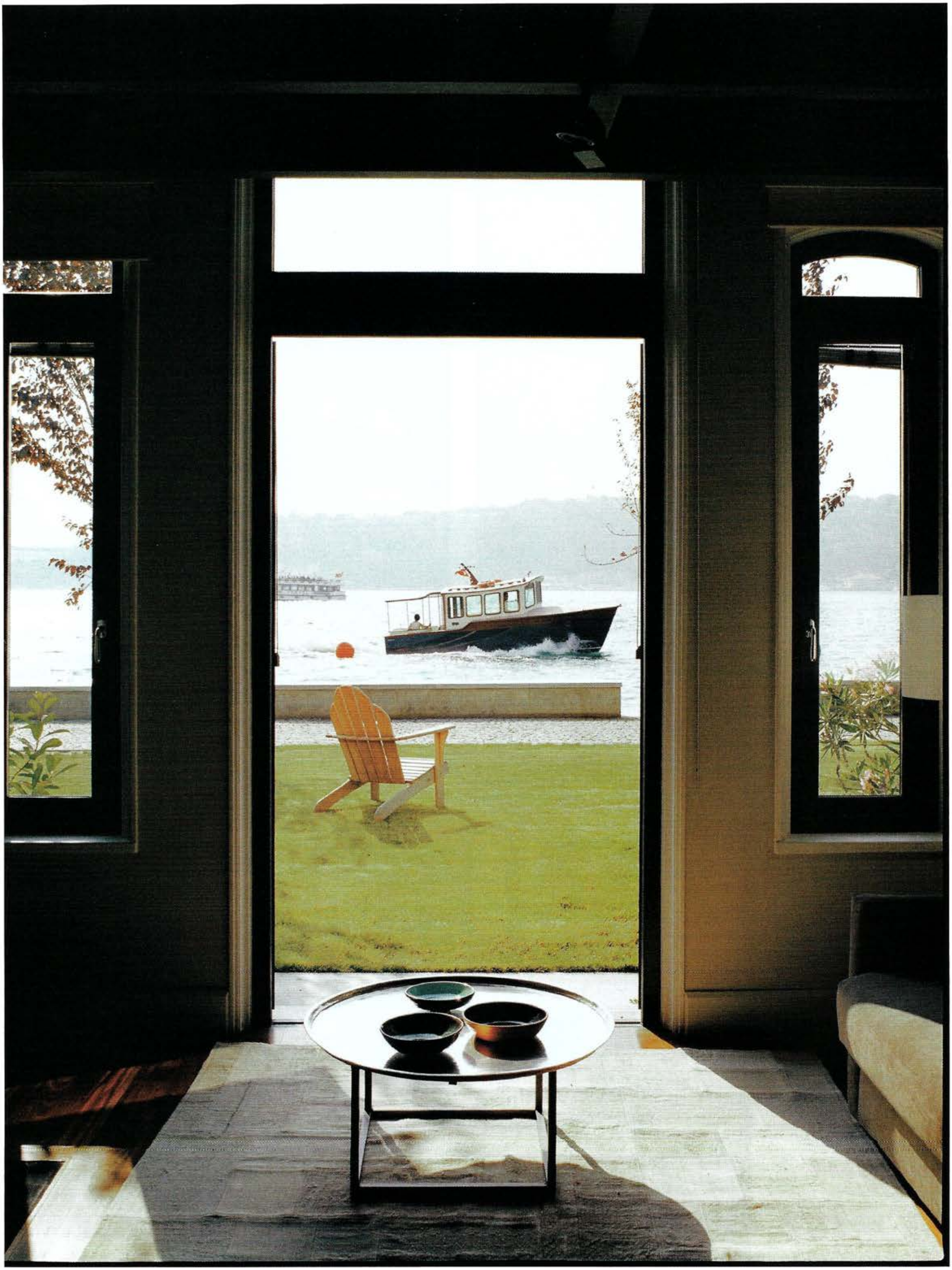
Born in Burgaz in 1887, Tevfik Cenani had arrived in Turkey in 1912, probably among the hundreds of thousands of Muslims fleeing before the various Balkan armies. At the close of the Ottoman Empire he was producing aviation fuel for the infant Turkish Air Force, and owned an olive-processing factory and a freighter on which his various goods were shipped.

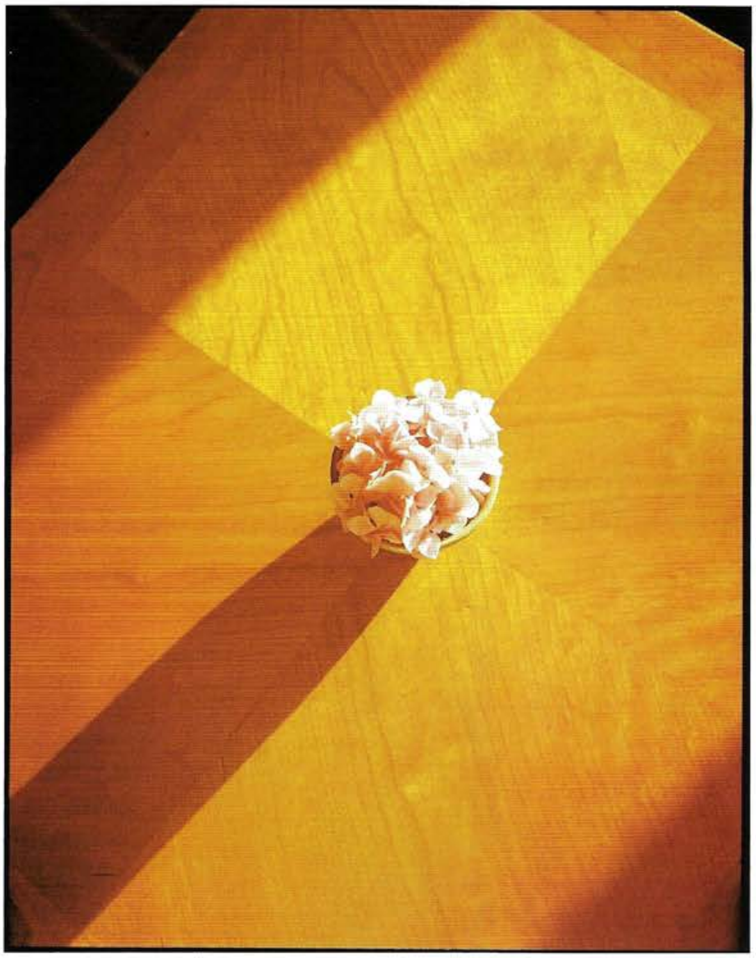
The acquisition of the spirit distillery at Çengelköy was one of his few bad investments. Mustafa Kemal's determination to nationalise key sectors of the new Republic's faltering economy saw the Turkish state take over the Régie, the French-run tobacco monopoly, in 1925. Similarly, alcohol production was taken over the following year, seriously affecting the viability of private distilleries.

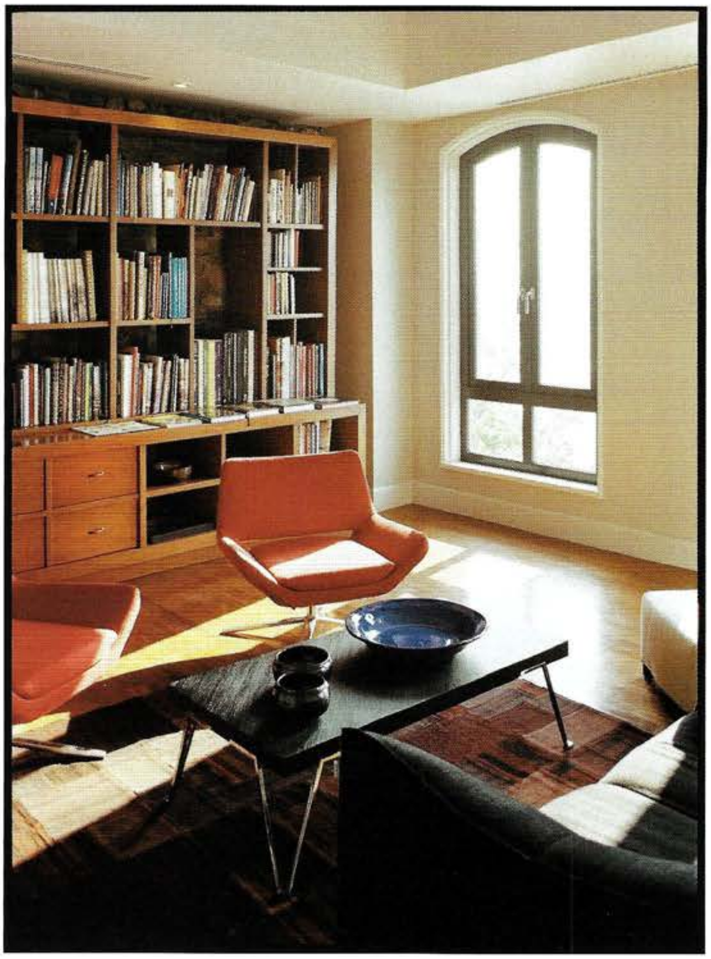
To stem mounting losses, Tevfik



LEFT: A STILL LIFE WHERE ONCE THERE WERE LIVELY STILLS IN THE OLD SPIRIT FACTORY. RIGHT: A DOWNSTAIRS SUITE OPENING ON TO THE WATERSIDE LAWN, COMPLETE WITH ADIRONDACK CHAIR. THE INTERIORS ARE BY THE BUTLERS' DAUGHTER YAŞA, WHILE THE HOTEL'S LAUNCH, SEEN HERE SAILING BY, IS MARK'S DESIGN







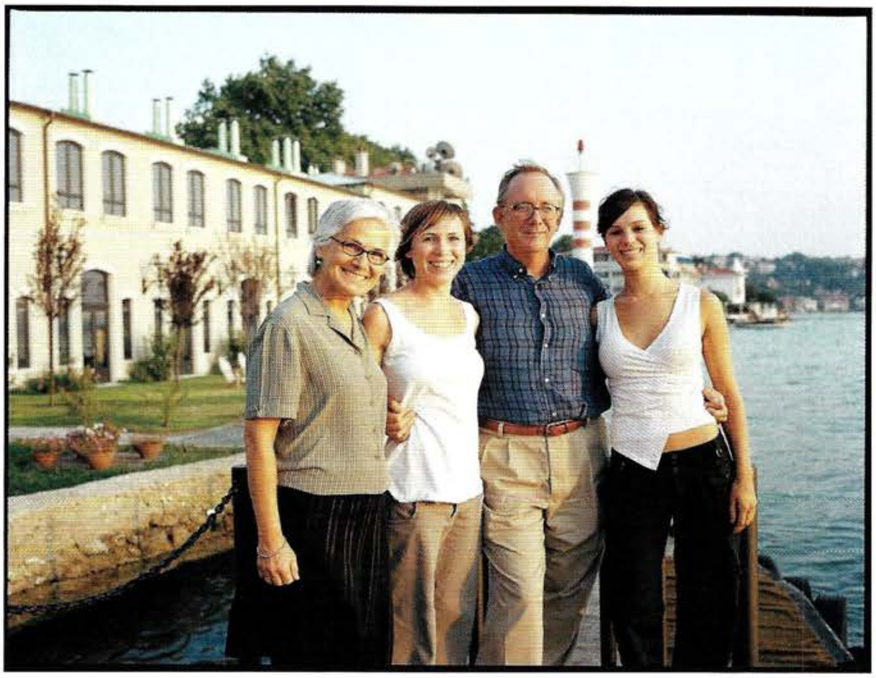
More Zen than Orientalist, the Sumahan is unashamedly modern. The library (above right) is stocked with furniture design classics as well as excellent books about Turkey. Right: a spacious, light-filled bedroom has an understated patchwork kilim on the teak floor, and a rib-vaulted steel ceiling that pays homage to the building's industrial origins. Opposite: the bathroom is a luxurious modern take on the old-fashioned hamam

Cenani – now known as Tevfik Cenani Ercan to avoid confusion with the Kanlıca Cenani family – tried his hand at the canning business and the production of briquettes for the Coal Board. On his death in 1949, the entire loss-making complex was leased to the nationalised TMO, the Soil Products Office, which was searching for a depot on the Bosphorus. When his widow, Nadire, died in 1958, the doors of the wooden *köşk* where the family lived were also closed, and for a decade they turned their backs on Çengelköy.

It was not until 1971 that Tevfik Cenani's descendants decided to reopen the *köşk*. His granddaughter, the young Tayyibe Nedret, then in her sixth year as an architectural student at the University of Minnesota, visited Çengelköy on the hunt for a Turkish subject for her thesis. Only then did she realise that her family owned the extensive ruin of the old spirit factory straddling the shore and the coastal road. And that was the genesis of the dream that eventually resulted in Sumahan on the Water.

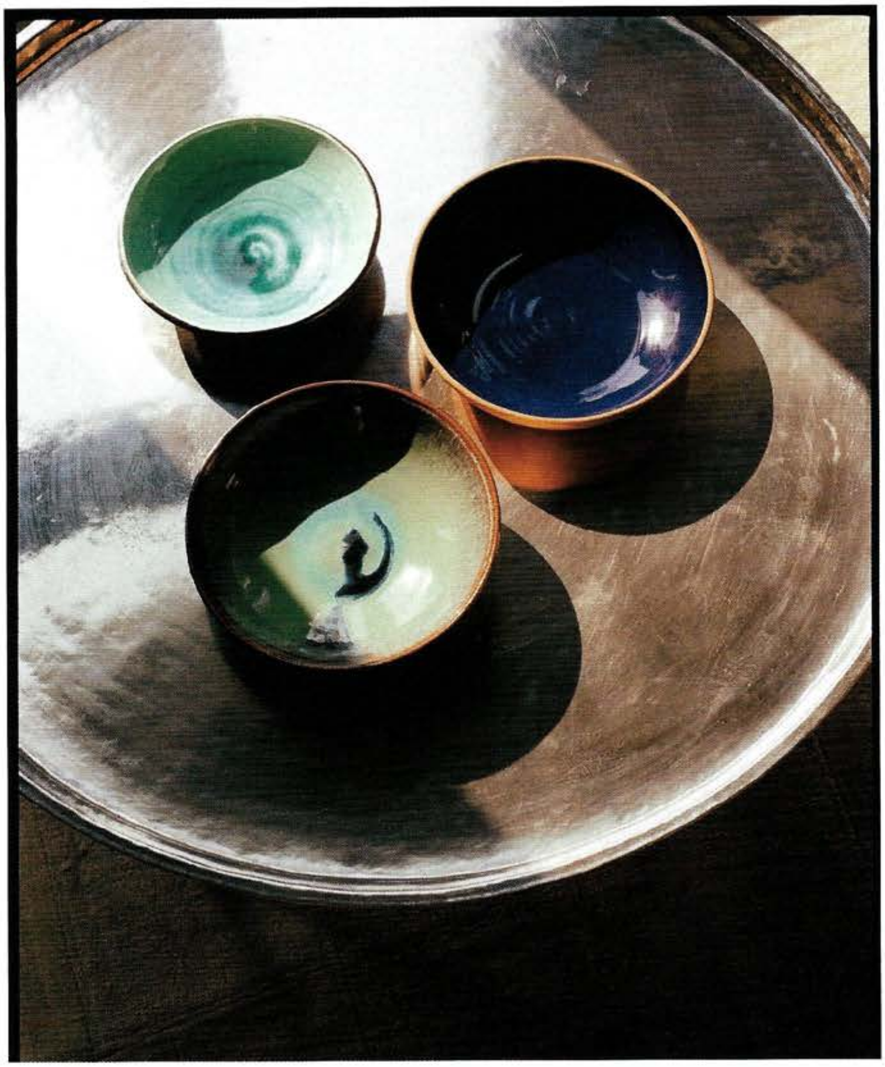
At that time part of the factory, with its central chimney, was still used to make coal briquettes. The TMO's sand and gravel were everywhere, and the dilapidated complex was very much in public use. Huts were spread over a makeshift sandy beach; an outdoor cinema had been set up against one wall, and village boys had colonised the recreation ground, tying their boats to it, and fishing and diving from it.

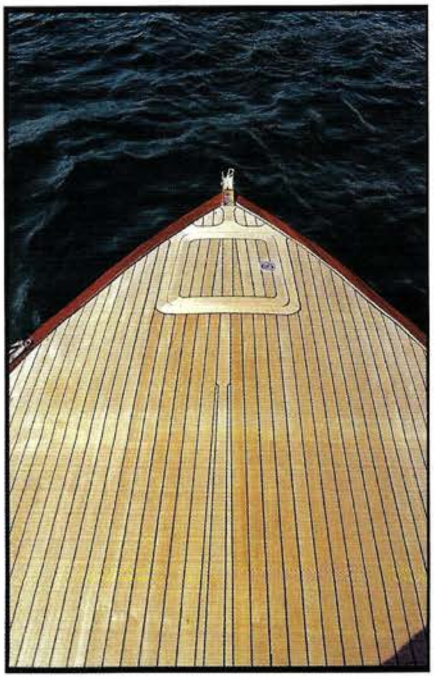
But Nedret could see the beauty of the incomparable waterside location and the potential in the masonry walls, arched windows and fine chimney. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of Mark Butler, her future husband and



HAPPY FAMILIES: FEW HOMES ALONG THE BOSPHORUS HAVE STAYED IN THE SAME FAMILY, BUT NEDRET BUTLER HAS HUNG ON TO THE LEGACY SHE INHERITED FROM HER GRANDPARENTS TEVFIK AND NADIRE CENANI (ABOVE LEFT). TEVFIK'S EFFORTS TO RUN THE DISTILLERY WERE DOOMED WHEN SPIRITS BECAME A STATE MONOPOLY. ABOVE RIGHT: MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY POSE IN THEIR GARDEN IN ÇENGELKÖY.

RIGHT: THE ARCHITECTS NEDRET AND MARK BUTLER ON THE QUAYSIDE WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS YAŞA AND EREN (TO MARK'S RIGHT). THE WHOLE FAMILY WAS INVOLVED IN THE RESTORATION, AND YAŞA WAS GIVEN A FREE HAND IN THE INTERIOR DECORATION. OPPOSITE: CERAMIC BOWLS ON A TIN-PLATED COPPER TRAY IN ONE OF THE BEDROOMS (TOP), AND (BELOW) THE WOODEN DECK OF THE SLEEK HOTEL LAUNCH





a fellow architectural student, her thesis envisaged an ambitious complex of two distinct zones, one either side of the road, with a bridge connecting the two.

Married in 1972 after graduation, Nedret stayed in the US, working first in Minneapolis, then with Mark on a postgraduate study of urban design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Sumahan dream was on hold until they settled in Istanbul in 1976. For five years they played about with a variety of proposals for the site in ever-changing applications for Ministry of Tourism backing. But the climate wasn't right: there was no real appetite for sophisticated tourist development, and the planning process became more complex, while finance for a grandiose project remained at best problematical.

The breakthrough came in 1994 when Nedret and her brother, Tevfik Ercan, decided to divide the property and he took on the buildings across the road from the distillery, together with the earlier stone portion of the complex, which incorporated the chimney. Part of this has now been turned into a restaurant.

Nedret's share, apart from the *köşk* in which she and Mark now live, was the long row of buildings downstream of the central chimney and the slipway to the water alongside it. With the scale of the project no longer so ambitious, or so expensive, the Butlers' architectural plans at last got the nod, as well as financial backing.

Work began. Once the debris of half a century had been cleared, standing walls were stabilised. Reconstruction required concrete foundations to be encased in steel, like a ship's hull, and sunk deep into bedrock. The whole service area of the hotel is well below sea level – during construction two pumps were kept at work to avoid the building floating away. Now it is earthquake- as well as waterproof.

The overriding aim was to keep as much as possible of the old structure and not to lose its spare but warm industrial feel. Where there is the least clue as to how the original was arranged, it has been echoed. It is fortuitous that the lie of the land, as well as restrictions on redevelopment of historic buildings, dictated one floor – the third and top one – giving on to the road, with a further two giving onto the water. The resulting privacy of the lower two storeys, meticulously designed around the factory's series of arches, is a major bonus. The arches dictated a duplex format for many of the suites overlooking the water. From the quay, the unsurpassable view to Seraglio point and old Stamboul, seen below the span of the First Bosphorus Bridge, epitomises the reborn Sumahan: old and new combined to best effect.

So the dream has been realised. Truncated perhaps, confined as it is to only part of the old distillery site, the Sumahan on the Water is nonetheless an adornment, rather than another blot on the Bosphorus: a gift to Istanbul. ◆

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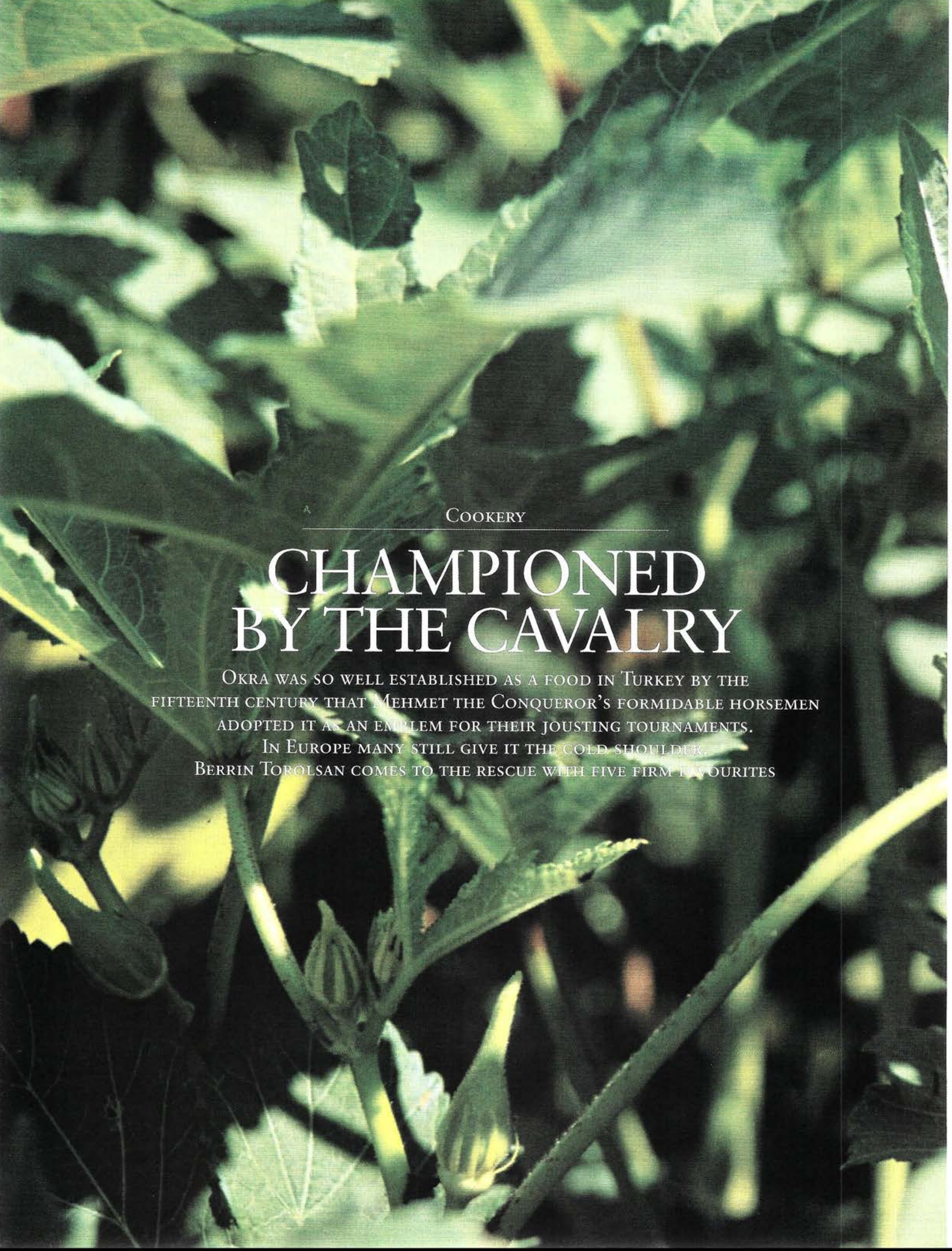
In addition to the Ercan family, the author would like to thank Naile Damali for her help in preparing this article.
For a complete list of articles by Patricia Daunt on the yalıs of the Bosphorus, visit www.cornucopia.net



Cookery

CHAMPIONED BY THE CAVALRY

Okra was so well established as a food in Turkey by the fifteenth century that Mehmet the Conqueror's formidable horsemen adopted it as an emblem for their jousting tournaments.
In Europe many still give it the cold shoulder.
Berrin Torolsan comes to the rescue with five firm favourites

BERRIN TOROLSAN

In the year 1402, when the formidable Tamerlane defeated the Ottoman sultan Beyazıt the Thunderbolt at the battle of Ankara, the Ottoman state was on the brink of collapse. The sultan was taken prisoner with two of his sons; the countryside was burnt, pillaged and ransacked. In the middle of this turmoil Beyazıt's eldest son, Prince Mehmet, who was lucky to escape his father's fate, swiftly tried to rebuild a defensive force to replace the lost army. From the provinces of Amasya and neighbouring Merzifon in the northeast of Anatolia, he recruited able archers and skilful riders from among the farmers to create two new mounted regiments. Later on, after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II brought this cavalry, which his grandfather had founded, to the new capital. Famed for their loyalty and skills in riding and combat, they became the royal guards. As their emblems, these two regiments modestly chose the vegetables for which their home towns were best known: the cabbage for Merzifon and okra for Amasya.

This little fact from the byways of history sheds light on something rather fascinating: that okra (*bamya* in Turkish) was in established use as a vegetable, quite as common as the cabbage, as long ago as the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Okra, *Hibiscus esculentus* (or *Abelmoschus esculentus*, as botanists now prefer to call it), is a perennial with eye-catching pale-yellow flowers that have prominent stamens protruding from their purplish velvet centre. It is related to some very pretty garden shrubs with colourful blooms, *H. rosa sinensis* and *H. syriacus*, often seen in parks today, and the luxurious *H. abelmoschus*, the musk plant of old, which was sought after for its musk-scented aromatic seeds, used to flavour the sherbet of oriental grandees. Medicinally, it has long been recommended for sensitive digestions, particularly in those convalescing from a high fever.

Our okra today is a modest plant, generously producing huge quantities of wholesome, tasty pods from early spring to late autumn. The fruit starts developing soon after the flower is pollinated, and pods can be harvested when they are three to five days old – allowed to mature, they become tough. In Turkey okra are cultivated around the Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean coasts and in other places with mild winters.

Istanbul is famous for its own variety, known as *sultanî*, or imperial, okra. The light-green ribbed pods have five segments and are crisp and tasty when cooked. On the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus, in the village of Kuzguncuk, which in the past was famous for its vegetable gardens, there is still a street called Bamyacı Sokak (the okra man's street), a reminder of those happy days. Other parts of Turkey produce different species. For instance Balıkesir, on the Aegean, is famous for its roundish okra which has a pod with six segments. Elderly inhabitants of Balıkesir like to boast that Sultan Abdülhamit II was so fond of the fruit of their town that okra at the palace always used to come from Balıkesir.

Last but not least is the okra from Amasya, on the Black Sea, known to connoisseurs as "flower okra" because the developing fruit is picked the day after the flower has passed. These tiny pods are threaded on strings like beads on a necklace and dried – a familiar sight in the Istanbul Spice Bazaar. We have been told that Edirne produces its own okra necklaces, but it was the superior ones from Amasya that were exported to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and even Egypt. In the past okra were also preserved for winter by pickling them in brine.

In 1846 Charles White wrote, in *Three Years in Constantinople*: "Another vegetable, unknown to us, is bahmia, a green pulpy pod, the produce of a small annual. Its culture and employment is similar to that of the egg-plant." Sixty-five years later, in 1911, Duckett Ferriman, who spent ten years in Turkey, made the same point in his book *Turkey and the Turks*: "Favourite vegetables are aubergine and bamia, the *Hibiscus esculentus*, a kind of mallow, excellent stewed with unripe grapes."

Both writers mention it as a food unfamiliar to their culture and without, as yet, an English name. But, a century later, is it better known? At least it now has a name: okra, or gumbo in America, where it is believed to have been introduced from Africa with the slave trade. But it remains an acquired taste.

As a child I certainly found it difficult to get used to. Adding a spoonful of yoghurt converted me. Alan Davidson tells us in *The Oxford Companion to Food*: "Okra is only moderately popular in Europe, although it is eaten in the south of France and in Spain." The problem is "the gummy texture, which those who dislike it regard as slimy… Whatever one does, okra remains slippery."

A poor understanding of cooking methods could be the reason. There are ways to avoid the unwanted gumminess. Correct trimming of the stem is a crucial first step. One has to be careful not to pierce the pod, which would release the contents. Instead of chopping off the hard stem-cap, as many a lazy restaurant chef does, one should trim it into a cone shape, so that the pod then looks like sharpened pencil and the juices remain trapped inside. Secondly, the pods should be kept whole during cooking. Allowed to split, they will inevitably become "gummy". After a last-minute quick rinse, they should be added to boiling salted water acidulated with lemon or vinegar. The acidity counteracts any slipperiness and helps to retain the fresh green colour. When shopping, choose only tender, bright green pods no larger than your small finger. They will convert everyone into an okra addict.

In the gardens of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul one can see eighteenth- and nineteenth-century marble stelae crowned with cabbages and okra. They were erected to commemorate the winners of jereed matches, a javelin game played on horseback, and other tournaments held by the sultan's entourage in the palace grounds. The mounted teams still bore the emblems of the past, the cabbage and the okra, and were cheered on by their princely supporters with cries of "*Lahanaya kuvvet!* Strength to the cabbage!" or "*Bamyaya lezzet!* Taste to the okra!"

SHARPENED LIKE PENCILS SO THAT THEY RETAIN THEIR JUICES, OKRA MARRY WELL WITH PEPPERS OF EVERY KIND

BAMYA ÇORBASI
OKRA SOUP

1 string of dried okra
wine vinegar
300g minced meat (veal or mutton)
1 medium onion (finely grated)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Butter (optional)
Terbiye sauce:
1 egg
1 dessertspoon flour
Juice of one lemon

This thick, velvety soup made with dried okra is both tasty and nutritious. It uses the famous "flower okra" from Amasya, whose tiny pods are picked very tender the day after the plant has flowered, and wind-dried for winter.

1 Place the okra in a napkin or cloth and rub them between your palms to remove the covering of prickly down. Bring to the boil a pan of water with a little salt and vinegar in it. Remove the string, drop the okra into the boiling water and blanch for 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat but leave the okra in the water to allow them to soak further while you get on with the rest of the preparations.

2 Mix the minced meat, onion, salt and pepper and knead slightly to blend the ingredients. Then roll tiny amounts of the meat mixture into *köfte* balls the size of chickpeas.

3 In a soup pan bring to the boil 4 glasses of water with a pinch of salt. When it is boiling, transfer the meatballs to the water. Drain, rinse and add the okra. When the water comes back to the boil, reduce the heat to a minimum and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes until the okra are soft.

4 To make the *terbiye* sauce: beat the egg with the flour and lemon juice. When they are thoroughly blended, ladle in some liquid from the soup pan and mix. Repeat until the sauce is warm. Return the sauce to the pan and reheat, stirring until the soup thickens.

5 Before serving, adjust the seasoning and add butter if you want a richer taste. Serve with lemon wedges for a little more acidity to stimulate the taste buds.

TAVUKLU BAMYA
CHICKEN STEW WITH OKRA

1/2 kg fresh okra
1 chicken (jointed)
2 tablespoons butter
1 large onion (chopped)
2 ripe tomatoes (peeled and chopped)
Salt
1/2 lemon

This is a light, soothing dish and is delicious with a white rice pilav, a combination that also makes an excellently balanced meal.

1 Trim and set aside the okra.

2 Heat the butter in a pan over a low heat and sauté the onion until translucent and soft. Stir in the tomatoes

and continue for a few minutes more. Add the chicken joints and fry until golden on all sides. Pour over one glass of water, the juice of the lemon, add the lemon rind and bring to the boil. Season, reduce the heat and simmer 15–20 minutes for the chicken to cook.

3 Rinse the okra under a cold tap, transfer to the pan and simmer for another 10–15 minutes.

4 Serve hot, perhaps with another squeeze of lemon for an extra tang.

Türlü
Stew with Mixed Vegetables

2 tablespoons butter
1 large onion (chopped)
300g mutton or lamb (cubed)
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Salt and pepper
10–12 green runner beans (trimmed)
1 bell pepper (seeded and chopped)
2 medium aubergines (sliced)
1 large tomato (peeled and cubed)
2 medium courgettes (scraped and sliced)
Handful of fresh okra (trimmed)

The vegetables in this rustic stew can be varied depending on the season and availability. Artichokes, leeks, potatoes and carrots can be included. The dish is finished by being baked in a casserole, preferably an earthenware one. Alternatively, it can be cooked on the stove, but in that case the ingredients should be added in sequence, as they cook at different speeds. The meat takes longest, then the beans, then the pepper and aubergines, then the rest of the vegetables. Delicate vegetables such as courgettes and okra cook very fast, so they should be added last.

1 Heat the butter in a deep pan and first fry the onion, then brown the meat. Add water to cover and bring to the boil. When it is boiling, stir in the lemon juice and simmer, covered, for about 30 minutes or until the meat is tender. Season with salt and pepper, add the runner beans and cook a little longer.

2 Meanwhile, trim and slice the rest of the vegetables and sprinkle with salt.

3 Pack all the uncooked vegetables into a casserole or ovenproof dish, then add the contents of the pan. Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes, until all the vegetables are tender.

4 Serve hot with plenty of fresh bread to mop up the delicious juices.

Kıymalı Bamya
Stew with Okra and Sour Grapes

1/2 kg fresh okra
1 tablespoon butter
1 large onion (chopped)
2 bell or any other peppers (seeded and sliced)
250g minced meat (veal or beef)
2 large tomatoes (skinned and chopped)
Salt and pepper
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 bunch of sour grapes

Sour grapes, known as *koruk* in Turkish, are acidic wild grapes, which were the main ingredient of verjuice. If sour grapes are unavailable, use a little extra lemon juice to achieve the right tang. In old cookery books this stew is classified as *silkme*, meaning to shake, because the pan should be shaken once or twice during cooking, rather than stirred, to avoid splitting the fragile ingredients, in this case the okra.

1 Trim and set aside the okra.

2 Heat the butter and stir-fry the onions, then the peppers. When the peppers have softened, add the meat, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring until all the juices have evaporated and the meat is browned. Lastly, add the tomatoes to the pan and sauté a little longer.

3 Pour a glass of water over the minced meat and bring to the boil. Stir in the lemon juice.

4 Rinse the okra and add to the pan. Give the pan a good shake. Place the grapes on top, cover and cook, without disturbing, over a moderate heat. The dish is ready to be served as soon as the okra are soft to the bite but still intact. Do not let them overcook and split.

5 Discard the grapes and serve hot. It is not customary, but a dollop of creamy natural yoghurt is worth trying.

Bamya Bastı
Okra with Olive Oil

1/2 kg fresh okra
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion (finely chopped)
1 tablespoon tomato paste
Salt and sugar
1 medium ripe tomato (unpeeled)
1 lemon

This light, lemony recipe makes a refreshing appetiser. *Bastı*, meaning to press, refers to the way the ingredients are weighted with a plate so that they cook undisturbed and take the shape of the pan (traditional Turkish tinned copper pans having a rounded base). Although it is time-consuming, the result is as pleasing to the eye as it is to the palate. If time is short, ignore step 3 below and simply transfer the okra to the pan with the simmering liquid, as in the other recipes.

1 Trim the okra and set aside.

2 Heat the olive oil in a saucepan and sauté the onion until soft. Stir in the tomato paste and keep stirring for a little longer. Add a glass of water and season with salt and sugar. Bring the sauce briefly to the boil and leave to simmer.

3 Give the okra a quick rinse under running water. In a heavy, shallow pan, place the tomato whole and unpeeled in the centre and arrange the okra in layers round the tomato, pointed ends out. The arrangement should look like an aster with its petals radiating from a red centre. Place a plate of the right size to fit snugly inside the pan on top of the vegetables so that they are pressed down and cannot move while cooking.

4 Squeeze the lemon and add the juice to the simmering sauce, stir and pour over the okra. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a minimum, cover and cook for 15 minutes.

5 When most of the juices are absorbed and the okra are cooked, remove from the heat. Leave covered and undisturbed to cool for several hours, or better still overnight.

6 Before serving, remove the plate from the pan. Place a platter over the pan and carefully turn it upside down to transfer the contents. ◆

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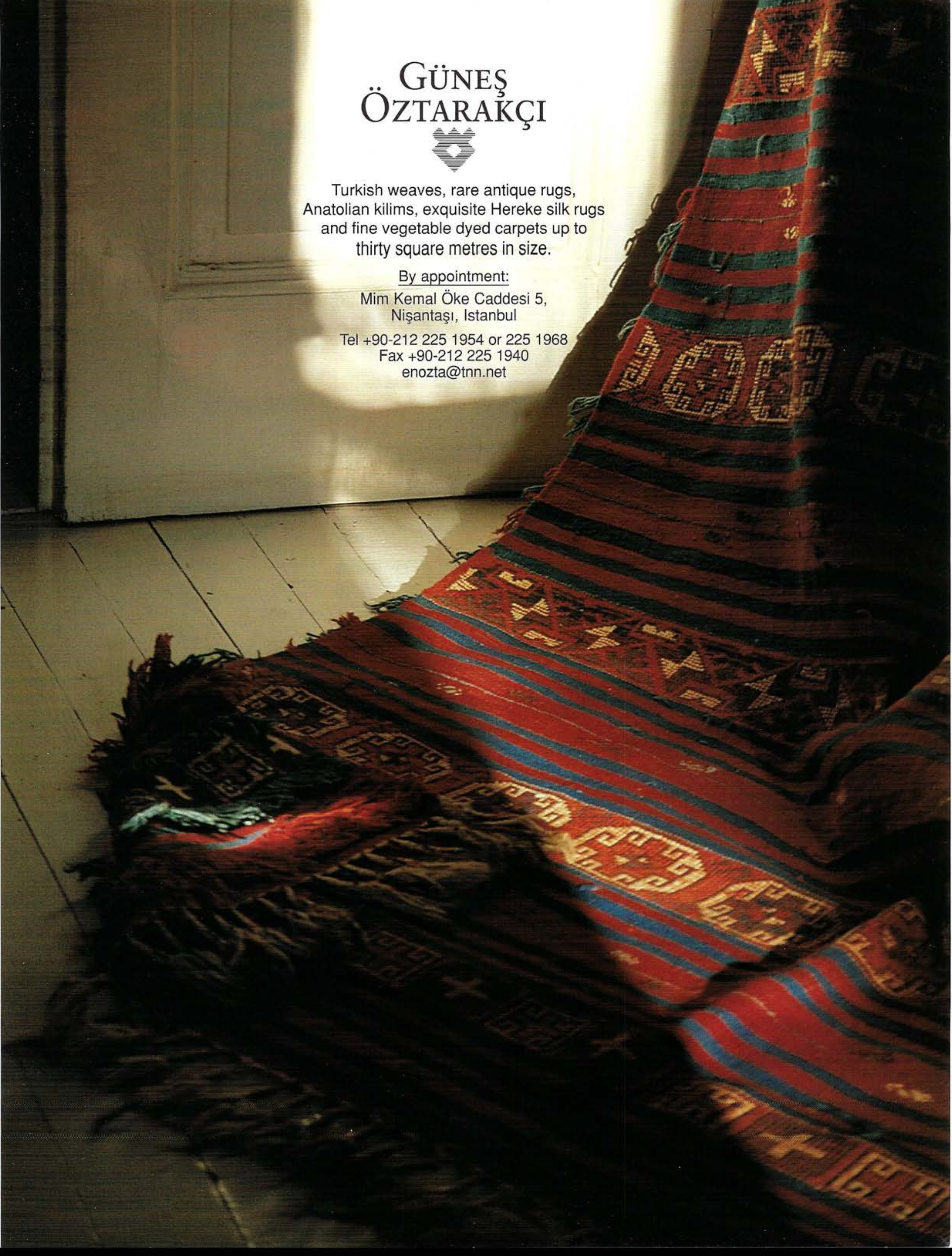

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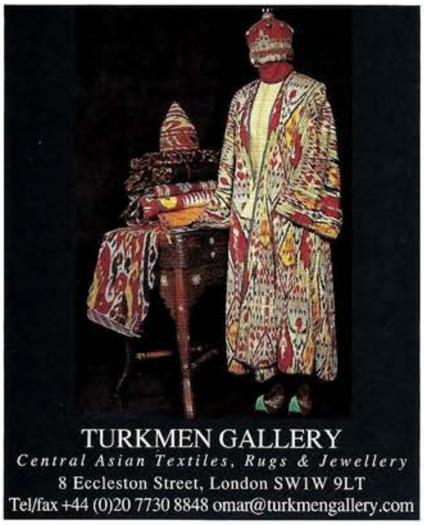

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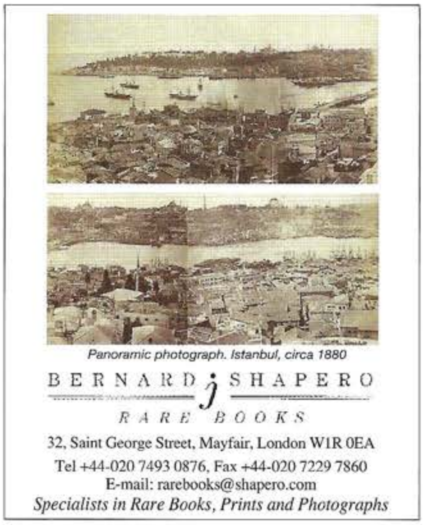

Panoramic photograph. Istanbul, circa 1880

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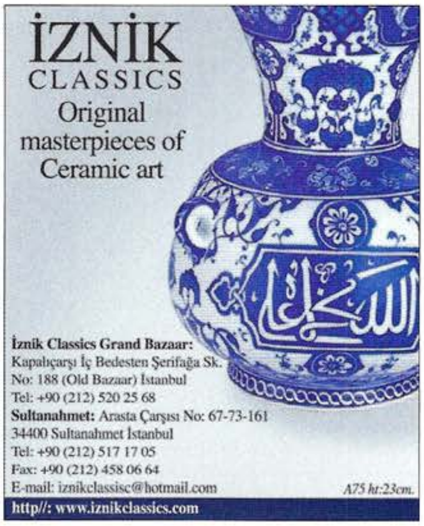

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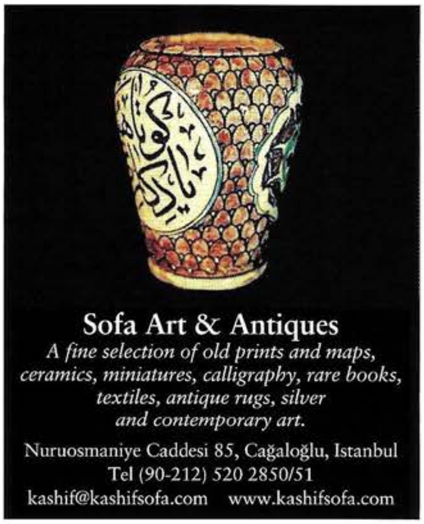

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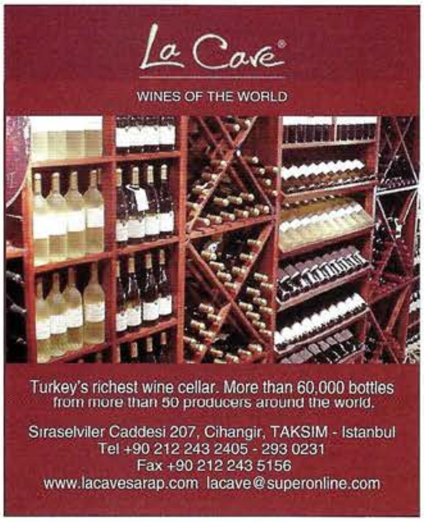

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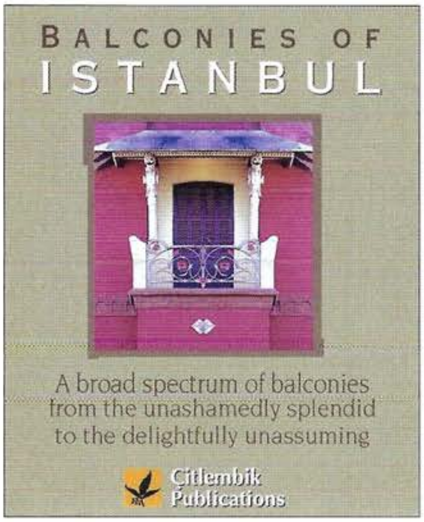

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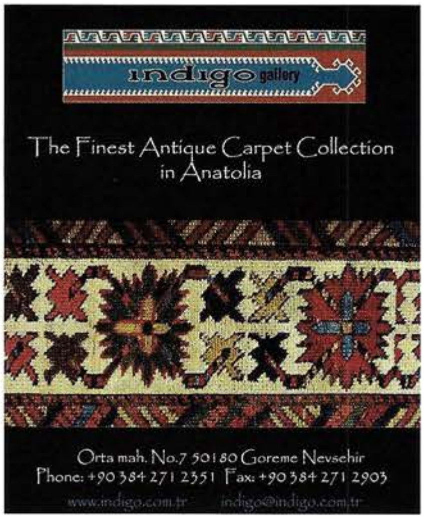

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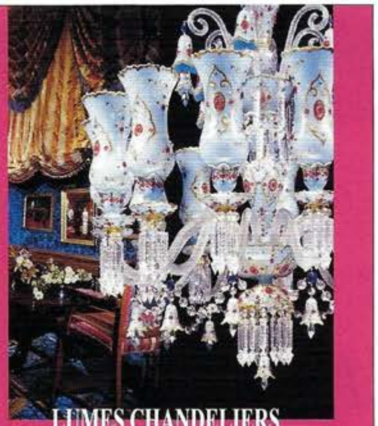

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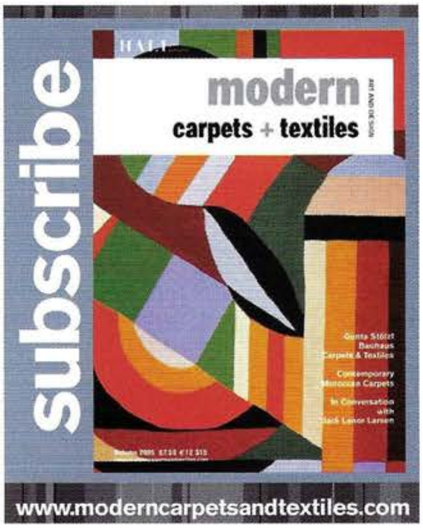
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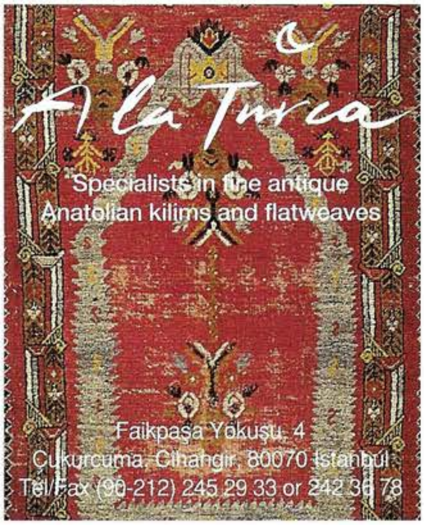

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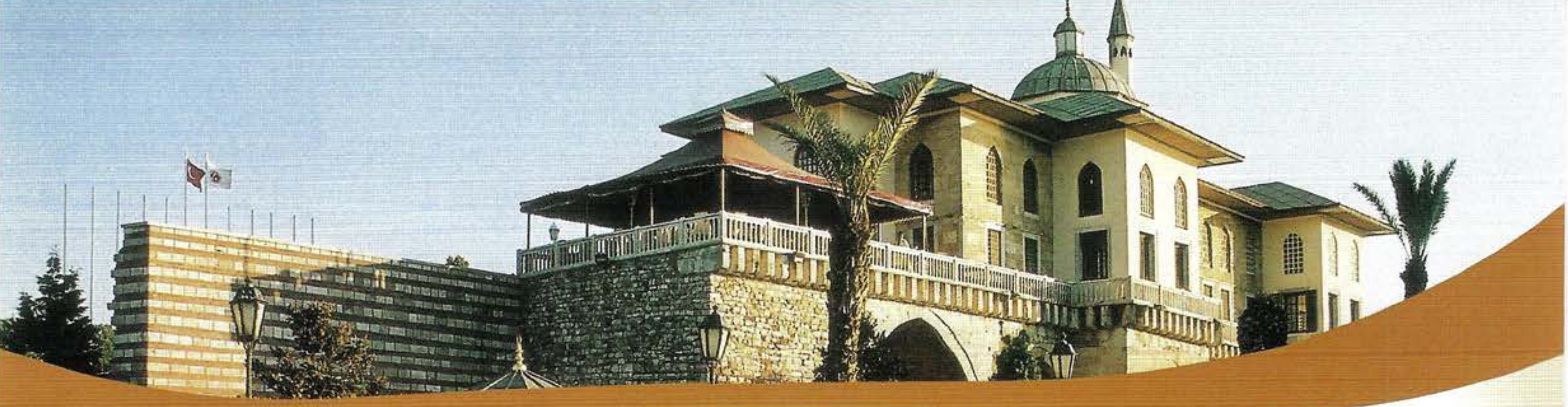

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VILLAGE VOICES

Azize Ethem reflects on a summer spent picnicking among the ancient tombs of Elbeyli, hoping for a ride on her husband's new motorbike, marvelling at the cooper's beautiful barrels and tracking down the silk-weavers of Kızderbent

Tales from the sewing room

Summer is drawing to a close and the evenings are becoming cooler. Next thing we will be stacking wood and bags of coal ready for the coming winter.

We are still getting enough orders to keep the sewing room busy. Our number-one seamstress, Şerife, is so fussy that even I am a little scared of her. When we have a rush job I am roped in to give a hand but I have noticed she only gives me the simplest of chores. Obviously my skills are not up to scratch, but so far my machine-stitching of straight lines is acceptable.

Ayşe Iki, a lass who left us to attend university, seems to be flourishing and Ayşe Bir's daughter is doing all the things a ten-month-old child is meant to be doing. Our latest news is that Fatma is expecting a baby; like Ayşe she has been hoping for a second child for years. There has been a lot of discussion about our farm being a place of fertility. The women are quite convinced of it and I wouldn't be surprised if they started charging would-be mothers a small fee to sit in the sewing room for a few days.

Selim has bought a new motorbike. I think he enjoys twiddling with it as much as riding it. This one has great twiddle potential as it isn't quite new. It is a 1964 BMW twin-something-flat-whatnot. I find it a little disconcerting that it is referred to as a "vintage" bike – which must mean anything over the age of forty-one is verging on antique. I hoped for jaunts to outlying villages once I had convinced him to pander to comfort and put a comfortable seat on the back. Pillion passengers must have had cast-iron derrières all those years ago. There are attachments for a side-car, which I think is rather exciting, and have visions of myself ensconced with a frilly parasol. Chance would be a fine thing; his evenings have been spent renovating and tweaking, with no chance of me getting a ride.

History's mysteries

We have been honoured with visits from some well respected classical historians this summer. I am in total awe of such people. They can look at what I take to be the remains of a rough stone cowshed (circa 1920) and immediately see that it was a late-Byzantine military watchtower. I come home absolutely exhausted from outings with these gentlemen. Whatever their age, they are as nimble as mountain goats and the knowledge stored in their heads is formidable. For someone like me, who doesn't know her Visigoths from her Ostrogoths, it is just too bewildering.

That said, it is wonderful to live in an area where traces of civilisation dating back nearly 5,000 years have been found and structures built over 2,000 years ago dot the landscape. Our farmlet is a couple of kilometres outside the city walls of Nicaea, yet a short stint with the wee ploughing machine produces half a dozen pottery or ceramic shards. Having no idea of just what they are, I am keeping them in a pile ready for the next historian who comes our way.

In late spring I packed a picnic for one and took off for the outskirts of Elbeyli, five kilometres from our house. Elbeyli is the site of a hypogeum with such fine frescoes it is said to be the most important of its type in Turkey. Barred and shuttered, this tomb can only be seen by making an appointment with the director of the Iznik museum. But it is not this site that attracts me; it is the modern cemetery of Elbeyli, which I like to visit each year when the wild poppies are in flower.

If you are not driving too fast on this stretch of road, you will swiftly realise that this cemetery has more to it than is immediately apparent. The expanse of modern wall is interrupted to accommodate an ancient tomb. Inside the cemetery are the eye-catching inscriptions on the gravestones of those born before the fall of the Ottoman Empire who died in the Republican era. Atatürk changed the calendar from the Hijri to the Gregorian, so the dates of birth on many of the gravestones are of the old calendar, while dates of death are recorded with the newly adopted Western date. Hence there are many graves that at first glance seem to show the deceased to be more than 700 years old. I love to watch the faces of friends who are not aware of this quirky aspect of modern Turkish history.

Towards the centre of this well-kept graveyard is an unkempt rise where poppies and thistles flourish. It is there I clamber to find a comfortable spot for my picnic. This hillock is where ancient tombs have been found, some not yet excavated. Not grand tombs like the hypogeum but, all the same, well-built, roomy chambers, built before the time of Christ. Sitting munching my sandwiches, surrounded by the poppies and the past, I ponder on the world situation and the importance of it all in the grand scheme of things.

Home, sweet second home

I am told there has been a spate of television programmes in Britain extolling the virtues of life in retirement on the Mediterranean shores of Turkey. When I was young, retirees bought themselves a caravan – the only people who had homes overseas were aristocrats or bohemians. Twenty-odd years ago it seemed that every London taxi driver had a villa in Spain. Then people started to buy derelict stables in remote French villages. Dinner parties were hijacked by trendy souls who just had to give a blow-by-blow description of the trials of rebuilding, and the joys of the local goat's cheese made by an authentic French peasant living nearby. Well, the price of villas on the Costa del Brit has soared and a considerable number of French stables were plagued with unsolvable building restrictions and miles of red tape. So now it is Turkey's turn.

If my friends down south are to be believed, the whole of the southwest coast is awash with foreign property buyers and European television crews. Ten years ago there were fifteen real-estate agents in Bodrum; now there are over 600. And 180,00 second homes in the Bodrum region sit empty for most of the year.

Tumble-down shacks have become hot property and mayors are holding open days to lure foreigners to their towns. Folk-dancing teams have never been so busy. Slick young Turkish salesmen who speak their mother tongue with a Manchester accent are the buyers' best friends. Clumps of luxury villas are popping up almost overnight. I think we are quite safe from the foreign hordes here in Iznik: we don't have a golf course, bars or leather shops. And thank goodness our lake is not edged with golden sands.

Beauty in a barrel

Turn left three streets after the church of St Sophia in Iznik and fifty metres on the left is a large, dilapidated shed. This is where Ismail Fıçıcı, the beehive-maker, works. Each year when we buy new hives I wait in the car while Riza goes in to choose what he feels is a hive superior to the others in the stack.

This year Selim went with me. Knowing that my husband's idea of heaven is a woodworking shop, I went in with him to sit in the shade while he explored every corner of the shed. One step ahead of me, having read the faded word "*Fıçıcı*" painted over the door, my spouse had realised that our hive-maker was in fact a cooper. With the instant bonding which takes place between lovers of wood, the pair of them went off to the courtyard at the back of the shed to admire barrels and discuss the merits of oak.

There was what Ismail said was a vinegar barrel, over two metres tall. There were water butts and olive barrels. Barrels for every occasion. This seventy-seven-year-old man, like a wizened pixie, is the last of a long line of coopers. Nobody wants beautiful wooden barrels any more – nasty fibreglass vats are the in thing these days. Our cooper keeps himself busy making oars for the fishermen and beehives for local apiarists. Driving home with our new hive in the back of the car, I glared at all the horrid modern window frames adorning old houses, the containers of all sizes displayed outside the agricultural supply shops, and wished plastics had never been invented.

Weaving their magic

In early summer I was told about a village not too far away where the women weave silk, so a friend and I went off to find out about them. This area, until twenty years ago, was in the silk-producing business and many of the old mulberry trees remain. I live in hope of finding a village where the locals still raise silkworms.

From Boyalıca we turned onto the Karaburtlan road. The verges and hedgerows were a mass of wild flowers, the fields dotted with flocks of storks. After driving through the rolling, verdant hills for twenty minutes we passed a cemetery – which would usually mean we were at the outskirts of a town. But it was more than a mile before we reached the small village of Bayındır. The houses and barns were very different from those usually seen in this area. Almost all were of one storey, with well-kept wattle and daub protecting most of the walls, which without exception were painted a mustard colour. Stopping at the teahouse, it was only minutes before two elderly locals joined us, only too happy to tell the story of Bayındır.

Following the Great Turko-Russian War of 1876, the sultan had given these Bulgarian Turks the land to build a village and to establish farms. After the First World War, in 1919, the village was occupied, and following the War of Independence, as so often in this area, the occupying forces burnt the village to the ground. For reasons I didn't quite understand, the villagers chose to rebuild in a new location, which explained the site of the cemetery. Today they make their living from mixed agriculture and dairy farming, and huge milk tankers negotiate the narrow road daily. Much has changed here since their ancestors arrived as refugees, but to this day they build their homes in the style of the village they left 129 years ago.

A short drive further on we came to the much larger town of Kızderbent, home to the silk weavers. Here the houses are bigger and two-storied, built in a style akin to Tudor, with the bricks packed between zigzagging beams. At a much larger teahouse with a huge old plane tree and fountain we were joined almost immediately by a group of men. My friend is a blue-eyed Turkish gentleman, which is not that uncommon, but I think it is the first time I have sat at a table with seven blue-eyed Turks. So much for the myth of dark-skinned, black-eyed Turks.

One of our companions was a man who looked about sixty-five, with a well trimmed white beard and an unlined face. Osman Tekinbaş was happy to tell us the town's story. The road we had driven down was the old road to Baghdad, and this had been a staging post. Osman Bey told us he was born in 1334, by the old calendar, which by my calculations means 1918. He came to Turkey as a six-year-old with his widowed father as part of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. This man I took to be in his mid-sixties was nearly ninety.

As I sat checking my sums he explained that the people of Kızderbent were originally from Darovası, a village in the Karaman province, near Konya. In the nineteenth century the sultan sent the villagers to Sarışaben (now Chrypolis), in northern Greece, to help build roads. When they returned in 1924, Atatürk, who was from the area they had left in Greece, gave them a choice of where to settle. On their arrival they stayed in Sinop, but then opted

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to settle in Kızderbent, a village which 1,000 Greeks had left during the exchange. Not a single house had survived and the only thing standing was one wall of the ancient inn. The rest had been shelled and burnt. The Greek families from Kızderbent were settled in a village near Drama, named Karagözköyü. Now each summer their descendants visit Kızderbent. They arrive by bus and stay several days, reliving the history of the town where their ancestors lived for generations.

Although I found Osman Bey's story fascinating, I was somewhat relieved when my friend announced it was time we moved on to visit the silk weavers. My chair was directly under a large bird's nest in the plane tree. While I sat sipping my glass of tea, my blouse had been decorated with a generous abstract white design.

It was only a two-minute walk to the building where the weavers work. Presumably visitors are a rarity, or the thirty women inside were bored at the end of the day, for our arrival prompted them to down tools and there was much banter and laughter. The silk-weaving turned out to be the weaving of silk carpets. A family in Hereke set up the looms in this town thirty-three years ago. Two spacious rooms house over a dozen large looms, with four or five women seated at each one. The women are paid per row of knots. With 120 knots to the square centimetre, and eight to ten rows being completed in a day, these large carpets take eighteen months to complete. Other women make smaller carpets in their homes. Until five years ago they used Turkish silk, but there is no longer enough available, so the silk they use today is from Uzbekistan, with Brazilian silk the second choice.

I was told years ago of the time it takes to make these carpets, and I have seen weavers demonstrating their skill outside carpet shops. But to see these women working on such fine, intricate patterns – their fingers moving so fast they were almost a blur – my appreciation of these carpets has soared. ◆

Beyond the Orchard, a collection of Azize Ethem's stories, published by Çitlembik / Nettleberry, is offered to subscribers post-free at £6.50.

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The final festivity in a traditional Konya wedding is a feast called "wedding rice" (*düğün pilavı*) to which anyone may come. That means literally anyone; no invitation is needed and no one is excluded. The food is cooked by specialist caterers who serve up to 10,000 guests at a time. Locals jest that on Sunday – these banquets are always held on a Sunday – the poor people of Konya stick spoons in their belts and wander around looking for a wedding rice. Naturally, the Konyalıs also tell a humorous story about a banquet-seeker who follows a crowd out to some remote neighbourhood, only to find they were headed to a funeral.

There's a similar custom in Central Asia. In fact, the very symbol of Uzbekistan, reproduced on murals, postcards and gift-shop souvenirs throughout the country, is a crew of men in kaftans blowing on immensely long horns. On the day of a wedding, they march through the streets, trumpeting away to announce the feast. As in Konya, the more, the merrier; the ideal is to invite *yetti mahalla*, or "seven neighbourhoods". The Uzbek wedding feast is also prepared by specialists, who cook mountains of pilav in hemispherical cauldrons four feet across.

Konya's wedding caterers are big business. An advertisement for one of them covers a large building beside the Konya–Istanbul highway halfway between the airport and downtown. It's not cheap to feed thousands of guests, but the tradition has one advantage. Families can never fall out over the menu, because it's an absolutely stereotyped sequence of six dishes.

When I was in Konya recently, the food writer Nevin Halıcı found me a wedding rice by calling up one of the city's leading caterers (who personally knew of twenty-five such feasts being held that day). It was to be in the cool, pleasant suburb of Meram, and the family was expecting a modest number of guests, something between 1,300 and 2,000. As it happened, the mother of the groom was a childhood friend of Nevin's, so we were also able to attend the groom's family's party – a very much smaller, invitation-only event the night before the wedding rice.

The same caterer cooked both meals. These men do everything, even providing a water tank with multiple taps for the guests to wash their hands. He created his cooking stations by building a low wall of cinderblock about thirty feet long, with more bricks set at right angles to it at intervals of four or five feet. Seven huge copper *kazans* were placed at the junctures, and wood fires were built under them.

When we arrived for the groom's party, chickpeas were boiling in one of the *kazans*, stock was being made from bones in another and soups were under way in two more. A man was hard at work toasting semolina for *irmik helvası* in the fifth *kazan*, stirring and shovelling it continually with a long wooden paddle. The milk that would eventually go into it was boiling nearby, alongside a *kazan* of water being boiled for sundry purposes. Masses of chopped meat had already been fried for adding to soups and pilavs the following day. Needless to say, cooking would continue all night.

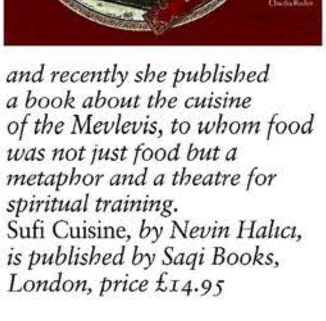
The main course for the family dinner was *tirit*, chunks of braised lamb served on bread with onions. Showing he was no blind traditionalist, the caterer had topped it with chopped tomatoes and *kıl biber* (the local mild green pepper, so long and thin it looks like a string bean) instead of the usual yoghurt. As a Californian, I felt quite at home with this innovation – it made it a sort of California Cuisine *tirit*. In fact, the bride and groom, though both from Konya, had met while attending college in California.

The next day we returned for the wedding rice, and this time it was much easier to find the house, from all the cars parked up and down the street and walkers straggling in from several directions – men in business suits, teenagers in T-shirts, village women in flowered pantaloons. "This is tradition," said Nevin as we walked among the tables set on the spacious lawn. "Some people sit the women at this table, the men at that table. But we will sit with the modern people."

At any Konya feast, one sweet dish follows every two savoury dishes. So after our yogurt soup (topped with a bit of fat from the other soup – not strictly traditional, said Nevin) and a pilav mixed with chickpeas and topped with chunks of lamb, we had *irmik helvası*. Then came a tangy okra soup and some pilav topped with fried meat. As friends of the family, we were treated to an extra portion of meat concealed under the rice (this is quaintly called *denizaltı*, "under the sea"). At the end came the soupy rice pudding *zerde*, which in Konya is not necessarily coloured yellow with saffron.

True to the event's name, every dish contained at least some rice. And true to tradition, everybody got "forty mouthfuls". At least. ◆

Konya is the home of the Mevlevi dervish order, to which Nevin Halıcı's family belongs. In his poems, the founder of the order mentioned a surprising number of foods for a mystic, and it is quite easy to put together a dinner of Mevlana's dishes. Nevin served me such a dinner when I was in Konya. It included lettuce salad, noodle soup (tutmaç çorbası), su böreği, *dried fruit compote* (hoşaf) *and an almond sweetmeat. And pilav, of course, which in Konya has the jocular nickname* kara haber *(the black news), because it indicates the meal is coming to an end. She has made a great study of this food tradition, and recently she published a book about the cuisine of the Mevlevis, to whom food was not just food but a metaphor and a theatre for spiritual training.*



Sufi Cuisine, *by Nevin Halıcı, is published by Saqi Books, London, price £14.95*

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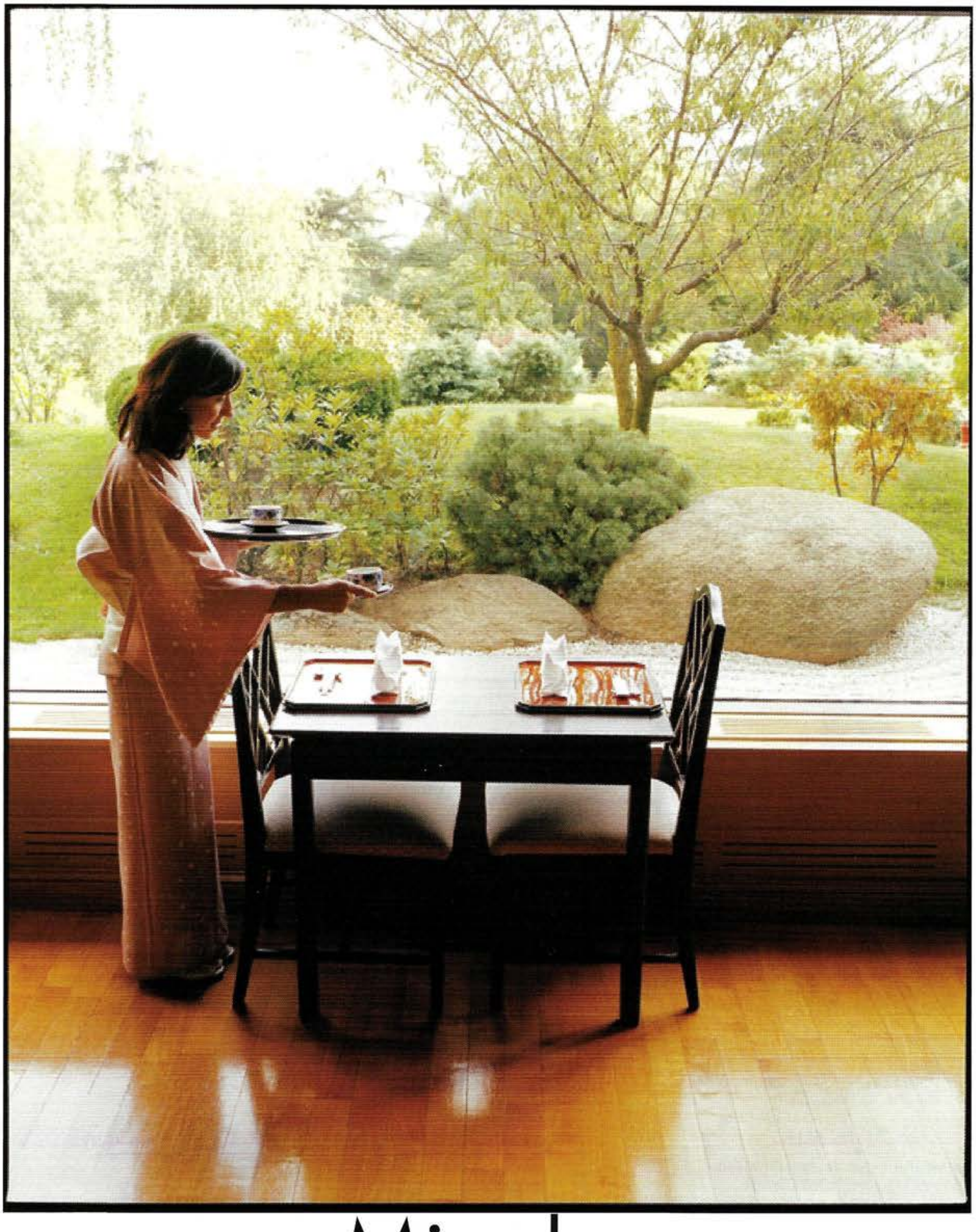

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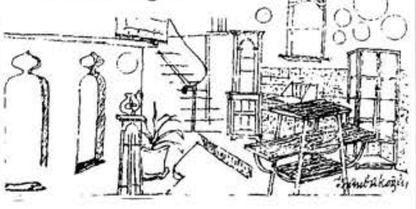

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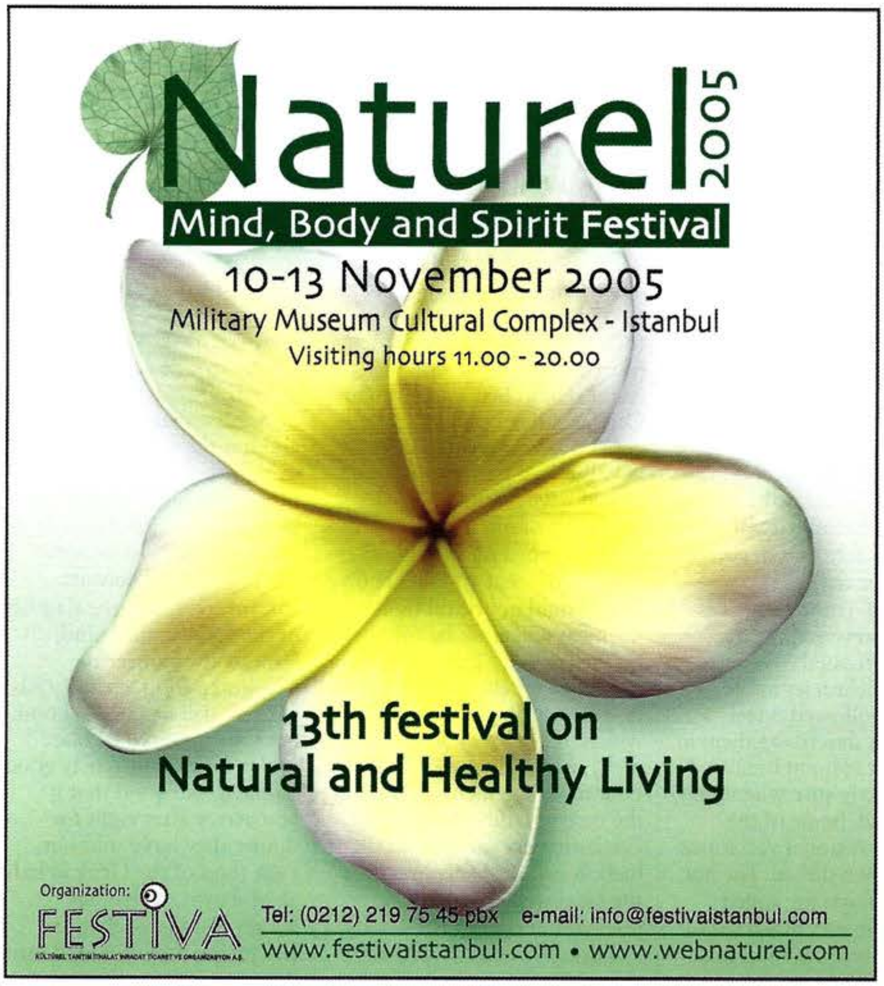
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Beyond the skewer

ANDREW FINKEL IS SPOILED FOR LIFE BY HIS VISIT TO GAZIANTEP, WHILE CHRISTOPHER AND FRANCES RYAN FEAST HEROICALLY IN AFYON AND KONYA

Passengers on flights leaving Gaziantep, I am convinced, are more laden with hand luggage than those from any other Turkish city. And what luggage! Trays of crunchy baklava, feathered layers oozing sugar and clarified butter, or pouches of dense, sweet red pepper paste and kilos of fresh pistachios with a mottled green and magenta soft skin covering the hard white shell. I, too, nearly dislocated a shoulder packing the overhead luggage rack with an array of delicacies: 1. Grape molasses boiled and thickened with cracked wheat that is reconstituted with butter, then smothered in walnuts – a high-energy morning treat which makes Wheaties seem like the breakfast of losers. 2. *Firik* – husked green wheat kernels that have been dried over a gentle fire of discarded grape vines and so retain a smoky, almost bacon aroma. 3. Not ordinary pistachios but tiny, "guano" pistachios (the Turkish is ruder) named after their intense neon green colour and mercifully not the intense flavour – all of which comes from having been harvested early. 4. Bottles of soured pomegranate molasses (which, like balsamic vinegar, is tasty but oh, so-o-o-o last week), but also sumac syrup, which must be the sourest edible substance known to man. 5. A large bag of bulgur wheat, which I know you can buy in any grocery store but which was a special gift from a member of an EU project to promote its consumption. It turns out bulgur is a miracle grain, healthier even than wheatgerm and ideal for stocking up the air-raid shelter because it resists both mould and radiation. 6. Lots of other stuff I am sure I will never get round to using.

I was in Gaziantep for a festival to celebrate the city's deep reverence for lunch, serious dinners and voluminous breakfasts. After one weekend, I began to marvel that the Istanbul-bound plane got off the runway at all. The deeper purpose of the festival was to display the complexity of the region's fare and to correct the prejudice that the southeast of Turkey survives purely on skewered meat.

We were treated to other Gaziantep delicacies in the meals that followed. I feel guilty about describing them in a restaurant column because I am not exactly sure where they can be found. Some of the dishes were regional variations of well-known dishes. The hot vine-leaf dolmas are rolled long and thin and make use of that sumac sourness and tons of garlic, almost tasting as if they had been stuffed with a good Italian sausage. Others were things I had never tasted, like *şiveydiz*, a yoghurt-based stew in which the principal ingredients are chunks of garlic, green onions and sometimes leek, or a meaty breakfast broth called beyran thickened with rice and seasoned with red pepper and yet more garlic. There was salad made from *semiz otu*, or purslane, and lots of fresh fruit. The great revelation was a pilav made from the green wheat grains of *firik* given a lighter texture by being mixed with bulgur. It is cooked in a lamb broth with chickpeas then covered with meat as well as almonds and those bright green pistachios.

However, there were still plenty of kebabs – kebabs with onions, kebabs with aubergine, with tomato, with roasted mashed tomato and of course kebabs skewered with cloves of garlic.

I believe I have been spoiled for life after lunch in a garden owned by the most famous restaurant in Gaziantep, **Iman Çağdaş**. Here I had perfectly cooked *sebze* (vegetable) kebab full of parsley and (who would have guessed?) garlic.

The art of making a kebab from chopped meat lies in the balance of meat and fat. The heat should not be too fierce or the meat will cook before the fat melts away. The result should be a delicate lattice of crunchy, well-cooked meat which, if it doesn't actually melt, at least disintegrates in your mouth. Much depends on the type of lamb. Kebabs in Gaziantep are made from the halik breed of sheep, in which the fat is well distributed throughout the animal's body.

Curiously enough, I first visited Gaziantep in the late 1980s, a time when Istanbul sophisticates sneered even as they gorged themselves on spicy thin kebabs – then regarded as "ethnic" food. Istanbul has changed since then and the kebab has climbed upmarket. Umami and Mabeyin are two Istanbul kebab restaurants that serve similar sorts of food in very different surroundings.

Umami, in Levent, on the European side of the city, takes its name from a supposed fifth flavour (after sweet, sour, salty and bitter) best described as the fermented aftertaste of a very good tomato or the muskiness of a shiitake mushroom. How this relates to the Adana kebab on offer, I am still trying to unravel. The meat is tasty and a great deal leaner than would be the norm back in Adana. In décor it is closer to a brightly lit noodle shop or the waiting room of a streetwise ad agency than the smoky, tiled kebab restaurant of yesteryear.

By contrast, **Mabeyin**, on the Asian side near the Altunizade exit of the first bridge, swarms with busboys and has the feel of a gilded, overstuffed armchair. It occupies a huge mansion and in fine weather boasts a large, atmospheric garden with tables scattered beneath elegant trees. It is the flagship of the Çavuşoğlu brand, famous for pioneering Gaziantep food in the 1970s in the Laleli neighbourhood, near the Covered Bazaar. It also boasts extremely good baklava – so good that if you arrive after eight for dinner they have sold out. I am fond of the Oruk kebab at Mabeyin, which has a high content of that life-enhancing bulgur mixed into the meat, so that there is also an extra crunch.

Although the Gaziantep kebab has made it to Istanbul, its journey further west has been slow. Elsewhere in this magazine I write about the kebab culture that has penetrated Great Britain, but these are largely great chunks of meat. The skill of hand-chopping and grilling minced lamb is not easily learned. I had a go on the other side of the Atlantic, in Washington.

Zaytinya, as its name suggests (an Anglicisation of *zeytinyağ*, the Turkish for olive oil), is Turkish but not quite. It might seem like the work of a second-generation American embarrassed by his ethnic origins. In fact it is the work of José Ramón Andrés, a Catalan chef, and satrap of the DC restaurant scene. His

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many establishments have introduced the city both to tapas and to the sort of industrial techniques used by Heston Blumenthal of the Fat Duck to deconstruct dinner. No such high-tech wizardry goes on in Zaytinya, although it has the air of a food factory. On weekend nights it can serve a thousand covers.

It's easy to see how the stylishly long bar and an exterior high-glassed wall attract followers of fashion. The restaurant serves Mediterranean Food, but this is something of an invented tradition. "Mezzes" are Mediterranean "small plates", the menu explains earnestly. Apparently the term means "middle" – something between lunch and dinner. Well, this may be true in Italy, where you might eat your meze in the mezzogiorno, but it is an absurdly false etymology of meze, which comes from the Persian for "taste" or "gusto".

The Adana Kebab "Tike" was not cut into *tike* (or bits) at all. But never mind. I watched sympathetically as one of my dining companions, someone who actually comes from Adana, stuck her fork into it. She flinched and almost looked ill when the meat bled. And it tasted of cumin. We sent the kebab back. It came back bloody. We tried to send it back again. "It's on the house," the waiter told us with a withering look.

I don't think many halik sheep graze inside the Beltway.

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Culinary campaign

ON THE FIRST LEG OF A WINTER JOURNEY TO EASTERN TURKEY, CHRISTOPHER AND FRANCES RYAN LAP UP THE WINTER WARMTH OF AFYON AND KONYA

Snow in mid-March, in Istanbul! It has been blown, no doubt, all the way from Kars, where the temperature is –20 degrees C. And it doesn't warm up on its westward journey – it just gets wetter. Not even crisp, fresh fried *hamsi* (anchovies) washed down with raki at **Kadir'in Yeri** in the nearby fish market can make bearable the icy blasts from the Black Sea that are funnelling down the Bosphorus to meet us in Istiklâl Caddesi. So, braving the blizzards below the Süleymaniye Mosque, we head on out of the city.

A long journey must be taken in sensible stages. In Afyon the sun is shining warmly. We repair to **Ikbal Lokantası**, the restaurant which has been owned by four generations of the Panca family since feeding Atatürk in 1922, before his final major battle in the War of Independence. Today local families are tucking into Sunday lunch of roast rack of spring lamb.

Frances and I are passionate fans of two culinary delights particular to Afyon, both of them specialities of Ikbal: grilled *sucuk*, a kind of Turkish salami – tender and tasty without being over-spiced – with a "shepherd's salad" of chopped cucumber, tomato, peppers, onion, parsley and dill; and *kaymaklı vişneli ekmek kadayıf*, a dessert of bread-like sponge soaked in black-cherry syrup, which serves as a base for a great slab of *kaymak* (clotted buffalo cream) on top. This is *kaymak* at its most sublime: as soft as musk, the perfect foil for the acid of the cherry and the sweetness of the *kadayıf*, with a flavour hinting at mozzarella and the texture of a weeping brie.

Thus fortified, at around £4 a head, we attempt an assault on Afyon's famous citadel, the Karahisar, 700 feet above the city. But halfway up we succumb to the beauty of the views. The plains of Anatolia beckon and we continue to Konya, where we have a supper rendezvous with a carpet-seller.

The East begins in Konya, and from here to India bread is the staple, rice a luxury. It was thirty miles south of here, at Çatalhöyük, 10,000 years ago, that man first cultivated wheat and made bread.

Damla serves three types: normal yeasted bread, light and crusty as baguette; *tırnaklı* ("fingernail") bread, a flat, yeasted bread whose dough is stretched by digging in and pulling with the fingers before it is baked in a domed wood-fired oven; and *açık ekmek*, the chapati-like bread cooked on a steel dome over an open fire throughout the Middle East.

After preparing our palates with a flavoursome cream-of-chicken soup, our carpet-seller orders a real Konya kebabfest, including Konya kebab – great hunks of lamb baked in its own juices – as well as *şiş* chicken, köfte and lamb *şiş*, cooked over charcoal.

The following day a short *dolmuş* ride brings us to the riverside village of Sille, a Byzantine site with cave hermitages in the surrounding cliffs. At **Sille Konağı**, a converted mansion which also acts as a small museum of late Ottoman rags and relics, we lunch lightly on *yayla çorbası* (yoghurt soup), *yaprak sarması* (stuffed vine leaves) and much tea.

Later we are taken to the outlying suburb of Meram, where we pay our respects to the patron of cooks, Şems Ateşbaz Veli, the thirteenth-century Mevlevi saint who was Jelaluddin Rumi's personal cook. Here at his tomb, down an avenue of winter-dessicated terebinth and acacia trees, we are given salt, symbolising the bringing out of the best of tastes.

Our evening meal at Konya's best restaurant, **Köşk Lokantası**, is prepared by the legendary female chef Zakire Hanım. Okra soup is followed by a very fine *su böreği* – wafer-thin pastry layers with a cinnamony minced-lamb filling; *fırın* kebab – tender oven-baked lamb, with creamy *tava yoğurt*; then *hoşmerim* – a true Seljukid dessert of pan-fried flour, butter, cream and honey; and, to finish, *sacarası*, a light, flaky, baklava-style nut-and-cream pastry. In addition, within the general mêlée of dishes, are *et tiridi*, little titbits of meat and onions on flat bread sprinkled with sumac, and a bowl of delicious *mantı*, perhaps the forerunner of ravioli, in a yoghurt sauce.

No visit to Konya is complete without trying the various flat-bread savouries: the original pizza, *etli ekmek*, (minced lamb, onions, parsley and peppers spread on wafer-thin dough); *peynirli* (with *kaşar* cheese); and *kuşbaşı* (with cubed lamb) – baked to a crisp crust in a traditional wood-fired oven. The next day we feed to bursting on all three at **Cero Restaurant.** We were warming to the East, as the East warmed us.

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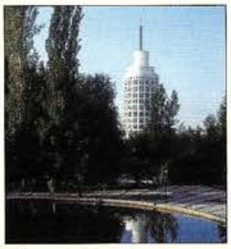

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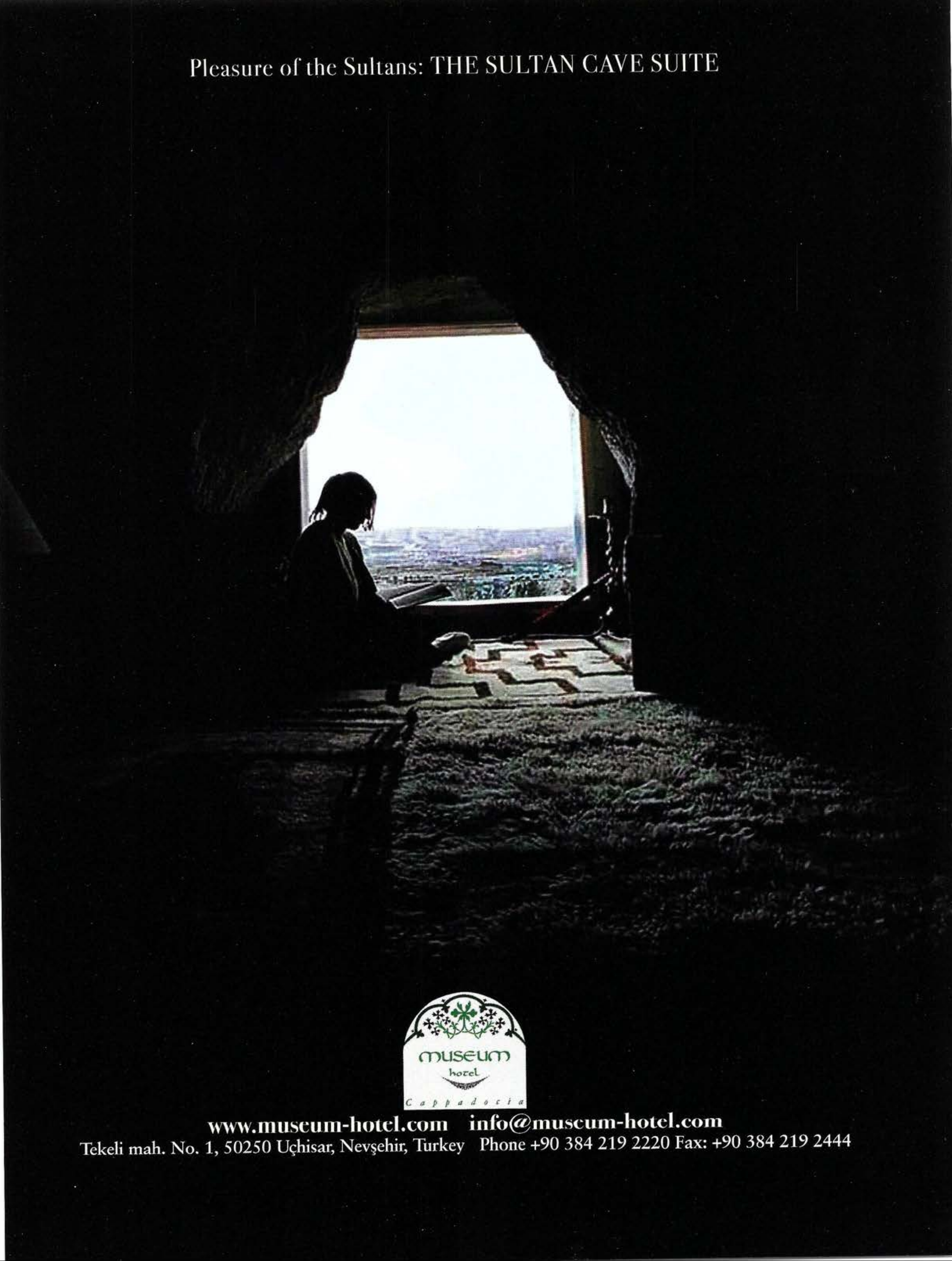
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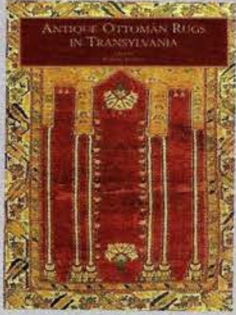

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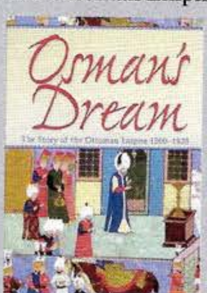

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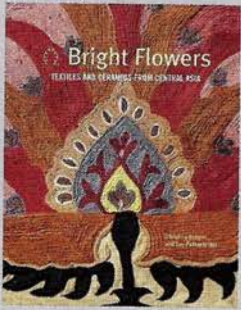

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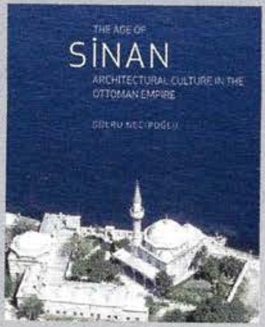

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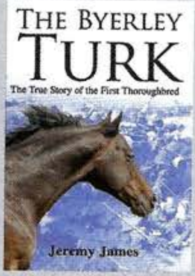

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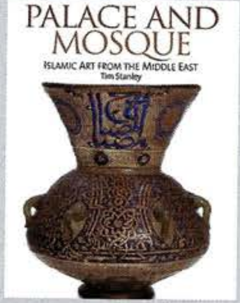

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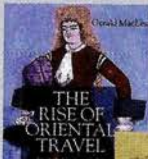

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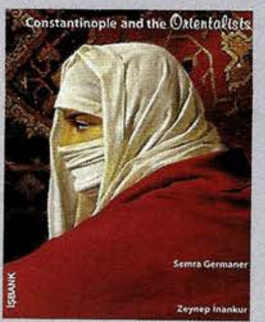

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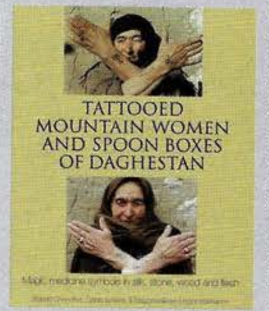

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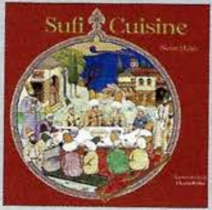

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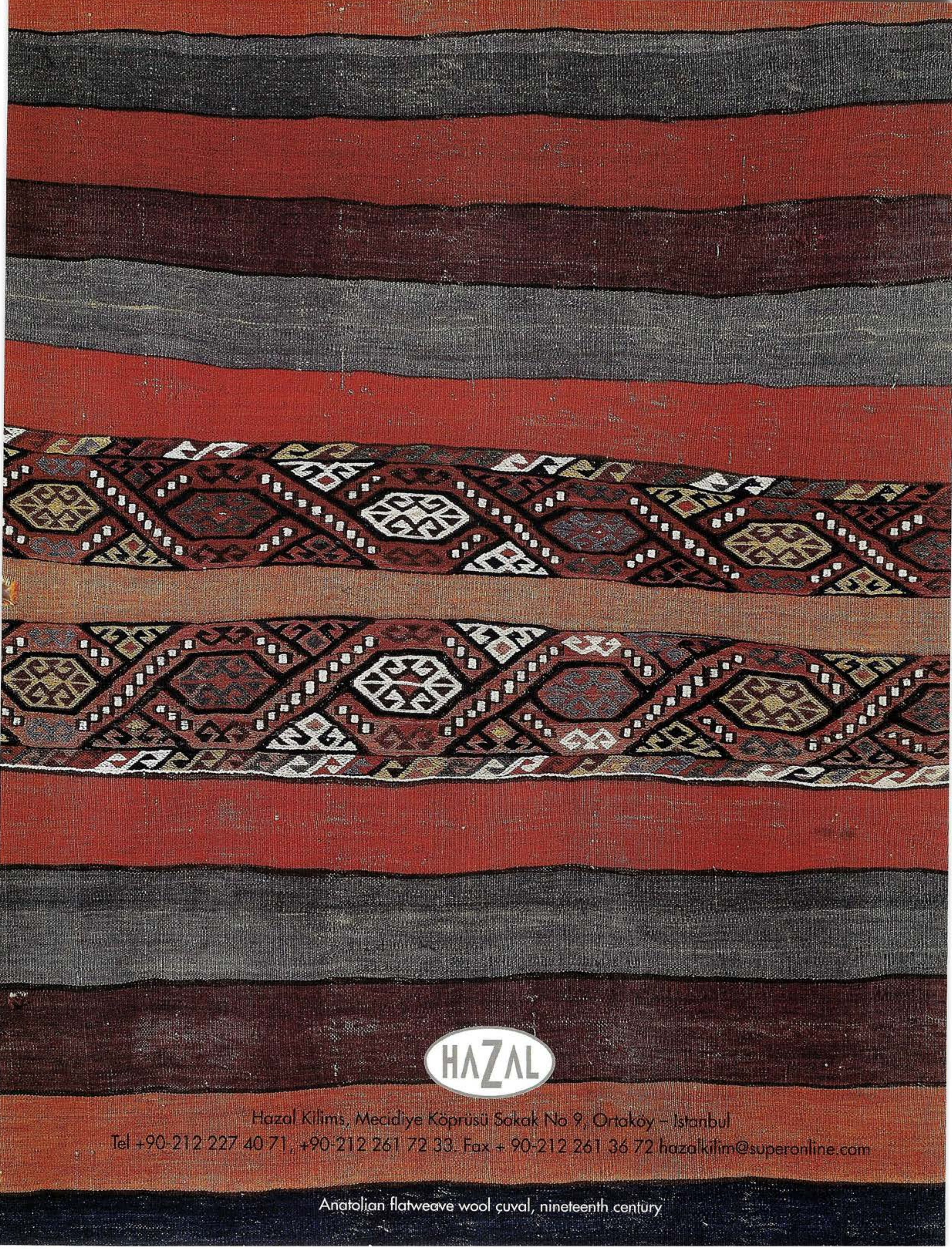

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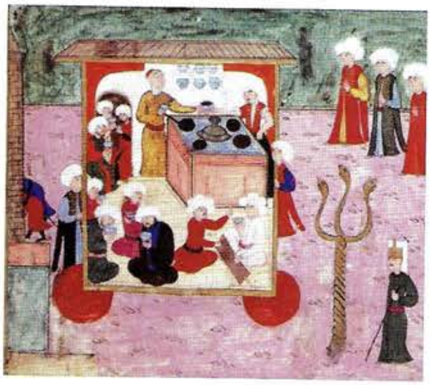
Anatolian flatweave wool çuval, nineteenth century

The Story of Turkish Coffee

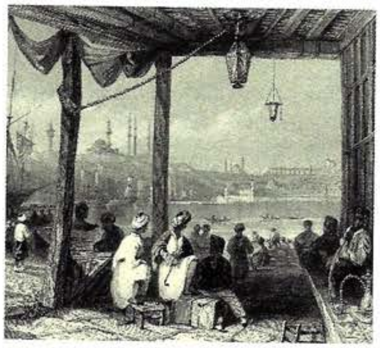
450 YEARS

When Özdemir Pasha, the Governor of Yemen, discovered the wonder of coffee 450 years ago, he brought coffee beans back with him to Istanbul.



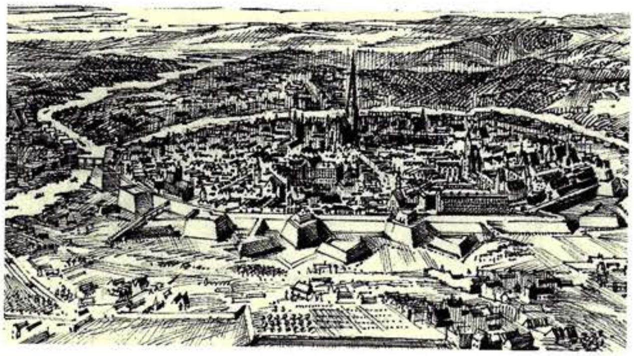
TAHMIS SOKAK

Almost at once coffee houses began to spring up in Istanbul, and the drink even gave its name to one of the city's streets, Tahmis Sokak, the Street of the Roasted Coffee Bean.



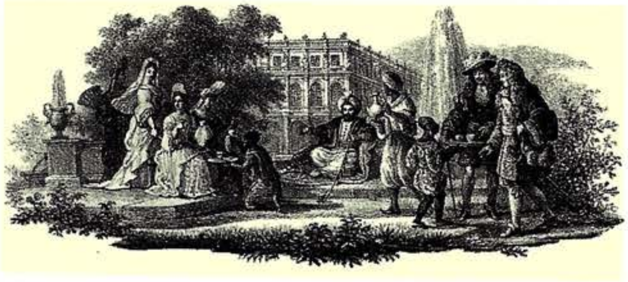
TO VENICE AND MARSEILLES

The fame of Turkish coffee soon spread to Europe – first to Venice, then to Marseilles – and from there to the rest of the world.



SÜLEYMAN AĞA

The French acquired the taste for Turkish coffee above all from the Ottoman Ambassador to Paris Süleyman Ağa, a legendary raconteur.



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